University of Alberta

Stories of an Immigrant Greek Woman: My Mother's Dowry Textiles

by

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A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts

in

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The undersigned certify that they have read, and recommend to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research for acceptance, a thesis entitled Stories of an Immigrant Greek Woman: My Mother's Dowry Textiles by Effstratia Antoniou Katahan in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree Master of Arts in Clothing and Textiles.

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Dr. Nanci Langford

Dr. Frances Swyripa

Oct 2, 1997
(Date of approval)

This is dedicated to my loving parents,

'Emperor' Antonio

and

'Nikokyria' Eleni

Katahan.

ABSTRACT

This thesis presents my mother's dowry textiles and the stories surrounding their production. I illustrate that as a cultural bridge this approach can be used to understand how women negotiate, reconcile, discard, and transmit cultural values to future generations. As a child of immigrant Greek parents, I used stories as a means of transcending cultural and generational differences.

Moreover, this thesis is concerned with 'the politics of representation'. I have drawn ideas from theoretical and methodological sources such as ethnography, narratives, feminist theory, anthropology, sociology, art history, and material culture. By combining narratives, reflexivity, and theoretical abstractions, I highlight issues such as voice, positionality, and subjectivity within the research process. Ultimately, I am seeking a method which integrates theory and practise and speaks *with* women.

PREFACE

Inspiration for Study

> ... our mothers and grandmothers have, more often than not anonymously, handed on the creative spark, the seed of the flower they themselves never hoped to see; or like a sealed letter they could not plainly read ... so many of the stories that I write, that we all write, are my mother's stories. Only recently did I fully realize this - that through years of listening to my mother's stories of her life, I have absorbed not only the stories themselves, but something of the manner in which she spoke, something of the urgency that involves the knowledge that her stories like her life - must be rewarded (Walker, 1991, p. 202-203).

As a child I would often ask my mother to tell me stories about her life as a young girl in Greece. More often than not, these stories revolved around the production of textiles and the inspirations for her designs. As we studied the multicolored embroidered cloths, images of my mother as a child and young woman emerged. The texture and colors of the textiles she laid before me became a means of breathing life into her memories. Not only was I in awe of what her hands had produced, but the textiles themselves served as a vehicle by which I was transported to another time and another place; a place I would never have the opportunity to know or experience directly. The textiles in conjunction with my mother's stories assisted me in experiencing my mother as a child and young woman; I was able to see her in a light other than in her role as my mother. Although I could not articulate it at the time, my mother and I were engaged in a

cultural exchange that I would explore in greater detail many years later. According to Greek mythology, " ... fate ... was spun as a thread ... the thread carr[ies] the child's destiny" (Westland, 1994, p. 234). By arousing my interest in textiles at such a young age, my mother not only passed on a tradition but indirectly infused me with the inspiration and the questioning required for my academic endeavors.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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To Margo Lang and Siusan Whitemore, I thank you from the bottom of my heart for your much needed support, encouragement and long distance phonecalls. You both never doubted me even though I doubted myself.

A very special thank you to Zinnia White for her love, understanding, encouragement and unconditional friendship. No matter where I live, my back yard will be filled with poppies and a burning fire pit.

To Greg Philp for introducing me to mussels, Nick Cave, fine wines, Black Dog(s), big skies, prairie nights, bouquets of garden flowers, fish, "The Tick", and crantinis. In other words, for reminding me that love is in the air everywhere you look around. Thank you for picking me up off the floor every time my plate got too full.

To my one and only beautiful sister, Angela Katahan. We are so different but so very much alike. I have had to search for a long time to find what you knew all along. This is for you and yours as well.

Finally, my most heartfelt thanks to my parents, Antonio and Eleni Katahan for showing me how to pursue dreams, face the challenges, and overcome the obstacles. I have been blessed by their love.

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INTRODUCTION

Textiles are produced by situated and active social beings. As products of our material culture, textiles reflect cultural identity, social values, group organization, social status, gender relations, and artistic creativity. Through their production and use, textiles make visible the relationship between social beings, objects, and environment. On a larger scale, textiles simultaneously fulfil economic, political, religious and artistic needs. At the same time, textiles do not contain fixed meaning. As they are used, traded, and distributed their meanings change to reflect the shift in context.

The English language textile literature reveals that cross-culturally women are not the exclusive producers of textiles. However, in rural Greece, textile production was a female dominated area of activity. At a young age girls were taught by their mothers and grandmothers the essential skills of producing textiles for their dowries. This process was an integral aspect of a young girl's education. Through the process of creating and accumulating textiles for their dowries, women acquired the fundamental qualities and skills required of the ideal wife and mother. Women not only produced textiles for their dowries, they also created textiles to be given as gifts to the groom's family. This was a reciprocal act; the groom's mother was also responsible for providing her son with textiles to be given to members of the bride's family.

For the last thirty years, there have been two prevalent frameworks used to study the structure and dynamics of rural Greek communities; honour and shame and private vs. public. These frameworks explore rural Greek society in terms of family structure, family relations, gender differences and the transmission of property through inheritance and dowry. Within these writings dowry textiles are merely treated as something women do. Scholars who have written specifically on Greek textiles focus on embroidery, costume, and weaving (Johnstone, 1972; Koster, 1976; Petrakis, 1977; Welters, 1988, 1985, 1984). These writers are mainly interested in the cut of the costume and in the weaving and embroidery techniques.

Creating textiles is not merely something women do. The act of producing a textile, as well as the textile itself, is steeped in issues of cultural conditioning. However, there is very little information available on what the process of creating and accumulating textiles for dowries meant to the women themselves. Furthermore, there is little information on how this process shaped Greek women's identities. Moreover, there is no information available regarding the change in meaning as they were circulated and distributed between mother to daughter, mother to son, and bride to mother-in-law. How did rural Greek women feel about the process of acquiring and producing textiles? Did they enjoy these activities? Did they feel bound to this 'tradition?' How did they feel about the institution of dowry itself? Questions such as these have yet to be explored.

Immigration also influenced and altered the production of textiles for dowry. A large influx of rural Greek women entered Canada during the 1950's[1]. Like their male counterparts, they too came to Canada in search of a 'better life.' Many of these women left their dowries behind; items such as land, homes and furniture were immovable. Some of the women did not bring their dowry textiles, others brought only a few of these cherished items, and others painstakingly reproduced these textiles upon their arrival into Canada. Researchers have yet to examine the effects of immigration on female specific areas of activity, such as production of dowry textiles. Upon her arrival in Canada, my mother almost ceased to produce the quality of textiles she had produced in rural Greece. What intersected with her life that caused her to stop producing textiles of this calibre? With the introduction of new cultural values, did the meaning of this process change? If so, what new cultural values were adopted and which old cultural values were abandoned? What new cultural values were created at the juncture of this intersection? How have the meanings of these textiles changed due to this shift in contexts?

From personal observation, I know that textile production is not practised as widely among first generation Greek-Canadian women[2] as it had been by their

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[1]Rural Greek women entered Canada as either 'picture brides' or they came to join their husbands who had immigrated earlier.

[2]By first generation I mean the children born in Canada of immigrant Greek parents.

immigrant mothers. In rural Greece, textile production for dowries was a means of transmitting social values between mothers and daughters. There is no information regarding textile production for dowries by first generation Greek-Canadian women. Is this activity still practised? If it is, why is it still maintained? If it is not, what has replaced it? How has the meaning embedded in the production of textiles shifted through time and space?

Even though there are studies available on rural Greek women and immigrant Greek women, these studies do not reflect or reveal how these women interpreted their experiences. Feminist epistemologists are noting that women's experiences, told in their words, are missing from existing literature.[3] In an effort to develop methods which will generate a body of knowledge for and with women, contemporary feminist scholarship is 'experimenting' with qualitative methods. These methods bring into question the 'politics of representation.' Embroiled within these politics lie issues of positionality, objectivity, subjectivity, accountability, interpretation, and voice. Many contemporary feminists are drawing on their own personal histories as the starting point in unravelling the various facets of experience. Others are drawing from the literary genre[4] as a

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[3] See S. Harding (1987), "Introduction: Is there a feminist method? and L. Code (1991). What can she know? Feminist theory & the construction of knowledge.

[4] For theatre see D. Kondo (1995). "Bad girls: Theatre, women of colour, and the politics of representation"; for short stories, essays and poetry see C. Camper (1994) (Ed.). Miscegenation blues: Voices of mixed race women, J. Arnott, (1994), by, for & about feminist cultural politics, P. Bell-Scot et al. (1991), Double stitch: Black women write about mothers & daughters.

means of exploring the possibilities of presenting women's stories as told in their own voice.

The creation of textiles makes visible the relationship between objects, social beings and their environments. Textiles produced by rural Greek women are material objects produced by women who actively participate in their cultural communities; as such, textiles are sources of cultural knowledge. This thesis aims to understand the dowry textiles produced in relation to the culture but more specifically in relation to the producers – the women themselves.

Within every sphere of activity, people exchange personal and cultural thoughts, ideas and beliefs; they exchange stories of their lives. Embedded within every textile is the story of the individual who produced it and the cultural landscape in which it was produced. Textiles are a source of cultural knowledge however, they cannot be understood in isolation. They must be examined within a cultural context and, more specifically, in relation to the producer. This thesis asserts that stories told about women in relation to the textiles can illuminate how women understand, integrate, maintain and transmit cultural knowledge.

While this thesis is situated in a broad context, it is narrow in focus. This thesis looks at the textiles produced by one woman – my mother. My mother produced textiles for her dowry starting from a young age. However, my mother did not bring all of her dowry textiles with her to Canada. The textiles that were left behind are stored in various trunks in the home that was built for her as part of

her dowry (see figure 1). Her dowry house has never been lived in and only serves as a retainer for the trunks filled with dowry textiles. Why did she produce and accumulate such items only to leave them behind? What transpired in her life to allow her to make such a decision? What are her thoughts regarding this tradition? If the eventual products, the textiles, were not important – then what was? Are there cultural ideals embedded within the fibres of the cloth that cannot be seen with the naked eye? If so, did the introduction of a new foreign culture alter them in any way? Did the foreign culture influence any other aspects of their lives? Situating the textiles my mother created for her dowry within the stories of her life assists me in making visible the relationship she held with her rural Greek cultural upbringing and the relationship she developed within the Canadian cultural landscape. Examining these relationships enables me to understand how my mother faced the social and psychological challenges of her new environment and how this environment influenced and changed her cultural identity. Furthermore, identifying the forces that changed the meaning of her dowry textiles will allow me to understand the cultural differences between immigrant parents and their Canadian-born children such as myself.

Knowing how one immigrant Greek woman faced the social and psychological challenges of her new environment will enrich our understanding of how cultural identity evolves – formulated, acted upon, retained and transmitted to future generations. For example, how did she deal with her first encounter with

Figure 1. House built for my mother's dowry (far right). Her dowry house was built in the mid-1950's. In this part of Greece the bride's family was responsible for providing the home where the new couple would reside. Photograph from the private collection of Angela Katahan (Photograph A. Katahan, 1988).

supermarkets, two-lane highways, and the taste of pasteurized milk? How did she integrate these differences into her established repertoire of meanings? What type of new meanings were created as a result of her reconciliations? How did she retain her cultural identity? Which aspects changed and which remained the same?

From my mother's stories I have learned that textiles reflect the cultural and physical landscape of the producer. They are not merely static material or decorative objects. Greek dowry textiles do reflect the options that were available to rural Greek women and the choices they made and the reasons underlying these choices. For example, when my mother was twenty-five years old she embroidered flowers of many colours and varieties onto velvet fabric that was meant to be given as slippers to her someday-to-be husband (see figure 2 - 2a). She did not marry my father until almost ten years later. This embroidered cloth remains the same as when she completed it almost 40 years ago. I love the brightly coloured flowers – the colours have not faded from age. Always when I gaze upon this textile, I think of my mother. I see her with her eyes downcast, in one hand she holds a threaded needle and with the other hand she stretches the velvet fabric across her lap. During our taped sessions, I asked her if embroidering floral slippers for Greek grooms was a tradition among the young girls in her village. She replies:

No it was not tradition. If the groom cared for sheep in the fields then

Figure 2. Embroidered velvet textile slippers intended for the groom. My mother embroidered this textile when she was twenty-five years old. At the time she did not know that she was to leave her family and marry a man in another country almost six years later. To this day, almost forty years later, they remain as a two-dimensional textile. From the private collection of Eleni Katahan. Dimensions: L=13", W=18" (Photograph E. Katahan, 1997).

Figure 2a. Detail from embroidered textile intended for slippers. My mother loved to embroider brightly coloured flowers. She would undo entire embroidered sections if her stitches did not appease her technical and aesthetic senses (Photograph E. Katahan, 1997).

you wouldn't make these sorts of things; he wouldn't need these types of things. If the groom owned a store, say a barber shop – you know – he did light things. Then you would make him these sorts of things.

"You didn't have a groom when you made these slippers – did you?" I asked curiously.

"No," she replied, "I made them and they could sit there." Her response did not satisfy my curiosity. "Because you made these did it mean that you wanted a groom who did light work?" I continued.

"No, I didn't know," was her simple reply. "I made some for my cousin Hariclea," she volunteered. "Her husband was an 'emperors.' He sold and bought fruit. Often he would go to the city and bring other things. He was like a business man." She adds,

There were different designs for slippers. You could have made them with fewer flowers. I like flowers. I got the design from a woman who made these sorts of things. Her name was Karethelia. ... I did a good job. Back then I had determination like you. ... If I didn't like what I had done I would undo the entire section. It took me about a month. You could do it in two days if you wanted. It depends on how long you would put it down for. ... The pattern is on paper and you would make stitches and stitches. Then you would pull the paper off and the stitches would remain on the fabric. After you would embroider the colours you wanted – see pink, red, dark or light green. ... Now they do these things on machine.

My mother's story reveals that embroidered slippers were usually only made for grooms who owned or worked in a business environment; men who participated in

'light work.' Carolann Barret (1991) examines quilts from a perspective of pure intent. Pure intent involves painstaking time to organize colours, reflect on choice of patterns, and the piercing of layers. Each decision reflects a choice based on personal experience embedded within social and cultural contexts. Analysing the slippers my mother produced from a perspective of pure intent leads me to ask, why would my mother take all that time and energy to create this textile only to have it 'sit there?" These dowry slippers in fact do contain clues which allow me to map my mother's history – her goals, ambitions and dreams. She did not marry a farmer and work in the fields under the under the hot rays of the sun. She married an 'emperor', a man who owned his own business; a man who did 'light work.' By presenting the stories of my mother I highlight the choices she made, why she made these choices; how these choices affected changes in her attitude and behaviour, and thereby influenced the upbringing of her children.

THEORETICAL NEGOTIATIONS

Framework

The Human Ecological framework recognizes that as social beings we create and maintain relationships with our environments. Touliatos and Compton (1988), define Human Ecology as, "... the study of human beings in interaction with their near environment, including their home (its design, furnishings, and equipment), wearing apparel, food, family, and community" (p. 20). Bubolz & Sontang (1993) acknowledge that "in an ecological perspective the quality of life of humans and the quality of the environment are interdependent. The well-being of individuals and families cannot be considered apart from the well-being of the whole ecosystem" (p. 425). According to Westney, Brabble & Edwards (1988) one of the goals of Human Ecology is to " identify the forces which enhance human development, actualize human potential, optimize human functioning, and improve the human condition and the quality of the lives of people" (p.129). I have adopted the Human Ecological framework because, (a) it recognizes that as social beings we interact with our home environment, and (b) it seeks to identify elements that intersect, interact and enhance our near environments. Human Ecology allows me to examine textiles, (i.e. the creation and use of textiles), as an avenue for understanding how social beings interact with their changing physical and cultural environments.

Throughout this study I have been concerned with theoretical and methodological issues such as voice, postionality and textual constraints. As a researcher, I am interested

in participating in research methods which will reflect and embrace issues which are important to women, their lives and their well-being. My ultimate aim in undertaking this research is to learn how to talk *with* women about issues which are important to them. I would like to understand women's actions and beliefs in their own terms. I am interested in generating theory that is grounded in women's experiences. I recognize that due to the diverse identities and experiences of women, and all social beings of course, many threads are involved in weaving the eventual shape of women's lives and their realities. Visvader (1988) notes that our behaviour is in fact regulated by action oriented personal and social values which are continuously in motion between self and environment. The Human Ecological framework provides me with the space to acknowledge and approach women as situated social beings interacting with their environments. Moveover, the Human Ecological framework enables me to consider identity as a *continuing dialogue* between a woman's individual agency and the various cultural, political and historical moments that intersect with her life. As a holistic and interdisciplinary framework, Human Ecology therefore allows me to acknowledge the tensions that exist not only in women's lives but also within the research process which in turn allows me to participate in and explore the possibilities of what Haraway (1994) has termed 'situational knowledge.'

Due to the multidisciplinary nature of Human Ecology, many threads have been involved in the structuring of this study. I present the stories of one immigrant Greek woman in order to understand the social values which have shaped her various identities. At the same time, I acknowledge that I can neither recreate nor even present the 'realities' of individuals separate from myself. All I can do is present a reality as filtered through my

perceptions. Therefore, what follows in not one story but rather many stories within stories. You will find her stories along with my subjectivity and theoretical abstractions. As a result, this thesis tends to be 'experimental' and does not follow the usual thesis formats. At the end of this thesis you will find my bibliography. In one form or another all these entries have influenced my thinking and the the shape of this thesis. However, I would like to point out the various perspectives which directly influenced the direction this thesis has taken.

Influences

Writings by sociologists Berger and Luckman (1966) and Polanyi (1967) aided my understanding of the 'taken for granted' knowledge which guides everyday life. 'Taken for granted' knowledge cannot always be articulated. It is intrinsic to our culture and the formation of our identities. Moreover, Schutz and Luckman (1973) recognize that the researcher is the ultimate research tool. I, as a researcher bring the products of my 'biographical situation,''stock of knowledge at hand,' perception of 'intersubjectivity,' and 'project' to the study. In other words, I, as a social being, cannot separate myself from the subjective nature of my existence. I am also imbued with 'taken for granted' knowledge that guides my everyday life which, by extension, I bring to my study.

These readings have made me contemplate how to account for my position within the research process as well as within the final text. Various researchers have reflected that an accurate analysis of the research, if such an analysis exists, hinges on my ability to recognize myself as a specific social being located within a specific historical context

(Behar, 1991; Burt & Code, 1995; Abu-Loghud, 1993; Hamabata, 1990; Kondo, 1990; Rabinow, 1977). Sandra Burt and Lorraine Code (1995), advise that when we take ourselves into account we can then question one another's taken for granted world views which in turn, "facilitates an exchange that opens new directions for ongoing inquiry" (p. 8). Abu-Loghud (1993) recognizes that the researcher is a historically, socially and culturally situated individual within a specific time and place and is affected, and sometimes significantly changed, by the individuals encountered during fieldwork. She states:

> The [researcher] self never simply stands outside; he or she is always in definite relation with the other of the study, not just as a Westerner ... as a Frenchman in Algeria during the war of independence, an American in Morocco during the 1967 Arab-Israeli war, or an Englishwoman in postcolonial India. What we call the outside, or even partial outside, is always in a position within a larger political-historical moment (1993, p.40).

Allowing the researcher to appear in the study is an attempt to demystify the research process and ultimately, question the myth of objectivity and neutrality of the researcher (Kirby & McKenna, 1989). Taking such a stance assists in alleviating the burden of the researcher as being a universal and all-knowing neutral presence. Sandra Harding (1987) states, that by exposing the researcher's culture, beliefs, and behaviour, we can "hope to produce understanding and explanations which are free (or, at least more free) of distortion from the unexamined beliefs and behaviours of social scientists themselves" (p. 23).

Abu-Loghud (1993) states that, "Positionality ... not only is not a handicap but must be made explicit and explored" (p. 5). As a result of such readings I have decided to incorporate myself within the body of the text. Thus, when I appear in the study, I do not seem like an invisible authority but rather as an individual participating in the research. Sharing my subjectivity and positionality is also intended to encourage readers to understand my decisions and actions and/or offer insights as to how my approach can be enhanced, changed, or altered to take into account these types of questions. In fact, it is by asking questions of ourselves and what we do that ultimately assists in bringing us closer to a more complete understanding of who we are and what we do as social beings. Is that not what the study of cultures and peoples is all about?

In the writing of the text, I have been greatly influenced by ethnographies, Van Maanen (1988) has termed 'impressionist tales.' These texts recognize that interpretations are highly contingent upon the setting and the people that intersect with the research at particular moments in time. In an attempt to convey how one culture unfolds itself to a particular individual – mundane aspects of everyday life must become a part of the text. Thus, culture is represented as continuously emerging ambiguous process. Ultimately, by exploring the endless definitions of 'realities' that exist, these texts demonstrate the problematic complexities of studying culture and social behavior. However, by presenting culture as an ambiguous process they are in fact illustrating how culture and social life proceeds. I have been particularly captivated by Paul Rabinow's (1977), Reflections of fieldwork in Morocco, Ruth Behar's (1993), Translated woman: Crossing

the border with Esperanza's story, Lila Abu-Loghud's (1993), Writing women's worlds: Bedouin stories, and Kamala Visweswaren's (1994), Fictions of feminist ethnographies.

Exposure to the oral narratives and personal stories of marginalized women sensitized me to the false images of women that have been generated and perpetuated within our larger communities. Audre Lorde's (1984) essay entitled, "An open letter to Mary Daly" made me reflect upon issues of 'giving voice' to women separate from myself. The truth of the matter is that I can never speak *for* or *give* voice to women, rather I can only speak *with* other women. I am particularly drawn to oral narratives because they allow me to understand choices made by women in terms of individual agency as well as the larger social relationships that underlie the construction of self.

Simultaneously, readings in material culture, specifically clothing and textiles, have shaped my understanding that objects do embody meaning on many levels. Textiles produced within specific contexts reveal various facets of cultural knowledge. I have been influenced by recent feminist academics in material culture who have embraced the quilting tradition as a source of knowledge regarding women's lives. Since most women left no, or very few, records documenting their lives, quilts are examined as texts of social history. These writings assisted me in understanding that the mere gesture of creating a textile is an intended act with a goal and purpose. B. Aptheker's (1989), Tapestries of life: Women's Work, Women's Consciousness, and the meaning of everyday experiences as well as writings found in C.B. Torney & J. Elsley's (1994), Quilt Culture: Tracing the Pattern, showed me that quilts have been used by women as an expressive outlet to convey their thoughts, feelings and desires. Quilts are produced within social

environments (quilting bees), usually involving only women but there are exceptions, in which women come together to create a utilitarian object for a specific purpose or event. Moreover, in the process of creating a quilt stories are exchanged between the participants. I have expanded upon this perspective because it acknowledges that in the process of creating textiles stories are told, memories are relived, and information is exchanged.

METHODOLOGICAL CONSIDERATIONS

"They Called Me Elenitsa"

My mother's stories, told in relation to her dowry textiles, have served as a cultural bridge between myself, a first generation Greek Canadian woman, and my mother, an immigrant rural Greek woman. Her stories have assisted me in understanding the social and cultural values which shaped my mother's identities as a girl, as a young woman, and as a wife and mother. This chapter approaches stories [1] as situated knowledge. As such, stories can be used to bridge the gap between theoretical thinking and everyday living. By presenting stories of my mother's social and cultural life, as told by her, I do not intended to *give* voice or speak *for* Eleni. Rather, presenting her stories is intended to bridge the distance between text and reader; presenting Eleni's stories is intended to engage the reader in dialogue with Eleni.

My mother was born in the village of Erressos, on the island of Lesvos (see figure 3) in Greece during the late 1920's. She is the youngest of three children; the eldest was her brother Stavros who died in 1989, her sister Szmenie who still resides in the village of her birth, then followed by Eleni.

> *When my father went to America my mother and brother lived with my grandmother. Her name was Eleni. I am named after her. Panayota and Netheli were my grandmother's children and they lived there as well. My mother's brothers and sisters were Panayota, Netheli, Theothoras, Sarapis and Mariyanth. ... My brother was 13 or 15 years old when my father returned. Then after* [her

[1] I use the term story in a broad sense to include theater, narrative, gossip, folk tales, poetry, autobiography, fiction, song, personal, and oral communication.

Figure 3. Overview of my mother's village, Erressos, Lesvos, Greece. In the summer families would move to their summer homes located near the ocean. In the winter they would move back to their winter homes located higher, closer to the mountains. Photograph from the private collection of Angela Katahan (Photographer A. Katahan, 1988).

father returned to Greece] *my sister was born and then I was born.*

... My Thea [aunt] *Mariyanth, my grandmother's sister, had lots of children. One of her children, the poor thing, was born 'handicapped.' His name was Yorgio. His legs were small and his head was big. He would wear these 'foustanelles'* [Greek traditional skirt which is layered, pleated and heavily starched] *made from striped fabric. They had a bride named Eftehia* [Thea Mariyanth's daughter-in-law] *who would sew his skirts. She lived near the ocean. Yorgio didn't like fish but if you cooked him some he would eat them* [laughs]. *'Oh fou'* [yuk], *he would say, "I don't want Eftehia to make my 'foustanella.' They will stink of fish. I want Elenitsa to make it." They would call me Elenitsa. 'Yeah' when I sewed his 'foustanella' he liked it.*

... I had an uncle, my mother's brother, his name was Theothoras, he was always laughing. He wore these 'vrakes' [large baggy breeches] *and a black hat. I never saw that man get upset. We would say, "When is uncle Theothoras coming to tell us 'paramethia'* [stories or fairy tales]? *Where did this man find these stories and how did he remember them all? Education he didn't have. How did he* ***remember****? There was another neighbour. His name was Michali Pandakos. We would say, "When is 'Theo'* [uncle] *Michali coming to tell us stories?"* [Starts to tell a story] *"There was once this prince who fell in love with a princess. The prince's mother didn't want that girl. They got married and had a baby. The baby was taken away by the prince's mother and put in a crate. The crate was nailed shut and thrown in the ocean. The ocean washed the crate to the shore and when it was opened the baby was found." Those are the types of stories they would tell us. ... They were always about princesses, kings, queens, princes, farmers – always like that. And these stories* ***never ended****. They would go on all night. They would go on and on and on; these stories never finished. I don't remember them now. I don't know how they* [uncle Theothoras and Michali Pandakos] *would remember them all. My grandmother knew lots of songs.* [starts to sing me a song] *"The church has three doors, I will wash one. If my love*

doesn't sweep you away, I will spill my blood." In those days if you loved [from grandmother's era] *someone, they could die. They had so much* [does not finish her thought; her voice trails off]. [Recites another song] *"My tears are running like the river. Why my little bird have you left without me wanting you too?"* [She explains] *If a boy loved a girl and her father took her to America, say* [for example], *he asks, " Why my little bird," a girl they would call bird, "Why did you leave without my wanting you to go?" ... These stories and poems were told by our grandmothers; older women would tell us these songs. They would sing them. There was a man who my father would bring to do carpentry at our house. When he worked he didn't talk. When he was finished you would give him an ouzo. 'Oh my gosh,' he would sing and tell songs! The farm he lived at was not far from ours. At night during the summer he would sit and sleep under the fig trees. You could hear him singing by himself.*

... Christmas, New Year's and Easter, Effy, were the largest celebrations in Greece. About a week before Christmas we would start to clean. We cleaned so everything became 'lambikos' [shiny]. *After that we would start to bake. We would make 'baklava,' 'melomakarona'* [clove and cinnamon cookies saturated in honey and topped with walnuts], *'kourabethes'* [shortbread cookies sprinkled with icing sugar] *and 'koulouryia'* [braided butter cookies]. *The night before we would make the 'mesethes'* [appetizers]; *'keftethakai'* [meatballs], *'dolmathes'* [rice with ground lamb/beef wrapped in grape leaves], *'tieropetes'* [feta and egg mixture wrapped in layers of filo pastry]. *Those types of things. Christmas morning we would set the table with a nice tablecloth and place a bottle of ouzo in the middle with glasses around it. After six o'clock in the evening neighbours, friends, and relatives, all these close people, would stop by and visit. New Year's was the same. Your uncle, Theo Theothoras, if he was not able to come to our house on New Years day he would come the next day; he had to come to our house. He had a really good heart. His wife's name was Aphrodite. They had a daughter named Amonie, a son named Pavlo, a son named Vasili and another son named*

Nicko. Pavlo now lives in Brazil and Nicko lives in Athens. After I left, he [Theo Theothoras] *died. Theo* [uncle] *Sarando also died after I left. Theo Sarando had three children. The daughter is named Elenitsa, one son is named Pavlo and the other is named Kosta.*

... At New Year's every woman was supposed to make 'vaseelopeeta' [New Year's cake]*; you would make it from eggs. You made it in the fireplace. They would make it in a* ***really big pan****. They would put in it one kilogram oil, really nice oil, after we would put in flour. Then they would pour in really nice walnuts because we had walnut trees. We would mix them all together and bake it on the hot coals. After, we would pour syrup over it and then we would cut it into really big pieces.* ***Oh it was very good. 'Ti omorphie etan'*** [how beautiful it was] .

... At Easter we did the same thing. It was closer to summer so everything was taken out and cleaned. They whitened the houses so everything was nice and clean. We lived in the house, where my sister now lives [this house was given to her sister as her dowry house], *we had roses, daisies and lilies. Like the ones they bring to sell here at Easter time. When these were in bloom and you walked by in the evenings it was* ***such a beautiful smell****. The Wednesday before Easter we had to knead the dough to make the 'kouloura'* [Easter bread]*; we made them from really nice flour. Good Thursday was called red Thursday because that was the day we would dye the eggs red. Some women dyed one hundred eggs; others would dye forty. You would dye as many as you wanted. We would put a red egg in the middle of the Easter bread. ... They say that the red is* [represented] *the blood of Christ. Everything had to be finished by Thursday because you were not supposed to do anything on Friday. About eleven o'clock in the morning you had to go to church. We would sometimes go to one of the smaller churches. We took 'levania'* [incense], *candles and we would make a 'sandwich.' A whole 'group'* [of women] *would gather and we would make company. We made like a 'picnic' and we would go to church. At six o'clock again the bells ring 'dango duko, dango duko.' The bells would ring slowly because Christ was crucified. After*

church was finished we made our way home. The next morning, Saturday, all the people had to butcher a lamb. Friday you were not supposed to eat. Some women didn't even eat oil. You could only eat bread, halva [middle Eastern dessert made from sesame seeds], *olives – those sorts of things. When the lamb was brought, all the children would gather to watch them butcher the lamb. Here it is different. The grandmother would sit down and brown a 'krimithaki'* [she would brown an onion over hot coals]. *Sometimes they added a little cinammon, a little orange zest 'ya na parie merothia'* [to enhance the aroma]. *They would use this to fill the inside of the lamb. We would sew it up and then coat it with lemon, oil, and a little salt and pepper. We would put it inside a large pan and we would cover it with dough made from flour. We would* [makes a gesture like pinching] *all around so that the steam would not escape. Now you would see in your yard or your neighbour's yard up to fifteen people with 'ceramic' pots. Everyone would bring wood to start the oven* [outdoor oven]. ... *After we put all those pots inside ... we had to take all the coals from the inside and put them in the front. The men would make mud from dirt and water – I don't really remember what they used. They would seal the oven so the steam could not escape from the inside. After one or two hours when you walk by –* ***'ti etan aftie ti merothia'*** [what was that smell]! *The entire neighbourhood* ***'moxxovolouse'*** [it smelled really, really good]! ... *The next day they would take them out* [the pots]. *They stayed in there all night. Some villages cooked their lamb on a rotisserie; our village didn't use rotisseries. ... Eleven o'clock in the evening we went to church. You had to have a nice dress and shoes. After the church service the bells on Saturday night, at eleven thirty, the church bells would ring 'haromenes'* [happily]. *That night you had to bring a 'lambatha'* [really big candle]. *It would be decorated with 'loulouthakia'* [small flowers]. *Everyone would carry their candles and we would go to church. The priest would hold a large 'eekoneesma'* [icon] *and carry it outside. Ayios Constantinos, that was the church I went to, behind the church there was a cleared area. All the people had*

gathered wood from the mountains and had made a 'steeva' [pile]. *Now when the priest came out of the church he headed towards this area with all the people following behind. I forgot to tell you the other thing. When we went to church on Saturday we would take the red eggs with us. As soon as it became eleven o'clock, the priest came out from inside and walked around the church and say 'Hriestos Anestis'* [Christ has arisen; mother sings this]. *Now you would see the girls and their friends – you know – 'clap clap' with the eggs* [they would strike their eggs together to see whose would break first]. *The large 'steeva'* [pile] *of wood would have salt in it. Now when they set fire to the 'ehthros'* [enemy] *the fire would go 'tsuck, tsuck, tsuck'* [makes cracking and popping sounds]. *As the fire burned, you could hear everyone saying 'Hristos Anestis, Hristos, Anestis'* [Christ has arisen, Christ has arisen] *and the eggs would be breaking between one another. That one was really nice as well. 'Yeah' that's how they made Easter in Greece.*

... In my village on May first they celebrate the flowers of May. The families go to their 'horafia' [fields] *and spend the day outside. They make swings and the children sing. They cut fresh grape leaves and cool 'dolmathes'* [stuffed grape leaves] *and cook fresh beans. They make a large wreath with the flowers of May and in the middle they would put a large garlic. They would take it and go to the village. They would sing* [starts to sing], *"May has arrived with her flowers. The first of May has arrived." They would go up to the village and the wreath would be placed on the upper floor of the house. Everyone would watch to see who would make the nicest wreath. We would say, "Look at hers – look at how nice her wreath is." Another would say, "Look at that one, hers is even nicer." ... They would put in them daisies and wild flowers. Next year I am going to make one for the house. .. Everyone planted garlic and onions. They picked a nice large garlic and hung it in the middle of their wreath. The garlic is for the evil eye they say. How do I tell you – those are the things that girls had to enjoy.*

Filters

> The things we look at happened, but what we present to you isn't ever the things themselves. We offer only recreated and edited versions of them, things seen through our eyes, heard through our voices, recast into our media. What we offer comes into existence in the editing, not in the happening (Jackson, 1988, p. 277).

While I recognize identities as continuing dialogues between a woman's individual agency and the various political, cultural and historical moments that intersect with her life, this perspective becomes problematic in interpreting and writing the text. Located within the textual conventions of every academic inquiry lie stories of people, places and things. The research process is a filtering process in which ultimately I, as the researcher, conduct, record, transcribe, translate, interpret, contemplate, arrange and evaluate the material I feel will convey my mother's life through textual means. While many researchers acknowledge their role in the filtering process, they do not provide the details as to how they eventually arrived at the final text. These texts do, however, reveal that the final text is unique to a specific time and place (i.e. to the researcher, research participants, and cultural landscape of both).

Technical Filters

Given the fact that I can never speak *for* or *give* voice to my mother, I have been plagued with finding a method which would convey, as accurately as possible, my mother's stories as told in her words. I can, however, convey the elements that make my mother who she is. I have derived direction from Gwendolyn Etter-Lewis and Michele Foster's book entitled (1996), Unrelated Kin: Race and Gender in Women's Personal

Narratives. Through various modes of representation, these researchers experiment and address issues of voice and positionality. I was particularly influenced by Janneli F. Miller's (1996) article entitled, "I have a Frog in My Stomach". By incorporating an entire excerpt from her interview, Miller uses Lucia's story as told in Lucia's words to illustrate issues involving "construction of self and the social negotiation of reality" (p. 105). Miller's presence does not appear within this segment of her article.

Exposure to writings found in Unrelated Kin (1996), as well as writings found in Women's Words: The Feminist Practice of Oral History (1991), and Women Writing Culture (1995) have influenced my decision to incorporate entire segments of my mother's stories into the text without the interruption of my questions. Fatima Mernissi (1989), presents all the details of her transcripts in an interview format where she poses a question and the participant(s) answers. While I recognize the importance of revealing the dynamics of the research process, I have removed all my questions from my mother's stories. My aim is to create a space in which my mother and the reader interact without my interference. I have differentiated my mother's stories with italicised fonts. At the same time I have to acknowledge that many of the nonverbal gestures which are a part of my mother's personality have been lost in this process. For example, I cannot convey the way in which she raises her eyebrows and slightly lifts her head to convey 'no,' or her gentle soprano voice as she sings me songs from her childhood. These physical aspects of her personality have been completely left out of this thesis. I acknowledge that I cannot convey these elements on a two-dimensional surface such as the written page. Further, I cannot translate the way in which she emphasizes certain words or the various tonal

speeds she incorporates in the stories.

Language Filters

My mother and I usually speak to each other in Greek; this is the way in which we interact. I am able to speak Greek but I understand it better than I can pronounce it. During those instances when I cannot articulate a Greek word, sometimes I cannot get my tongue around the appropriate sound, I verbalize the English equivalent. During June of 1997 I tape-recorded my interview sessions with my mother. The sessions were conducted in Greek, with occasional English words sprinkled throughout.

Over the last thirty years my mother has learned the English language through trial and error. Her vocabulary skills are at a level at which she can communicate in English; however, conversation flows more freely when she is conversing in Greek. She has learned various English words that she incorporates into her speech. For example, during one of our sessions I asked her if she knew how we could clean a textile that appeared to be heavily starched. I said to her in Greek, "If I were to wash this with soap and water, would the starch come off?" She paused and closely inspected the textiles, feeling the substance with her fingers. She responded in Greek, "It would come off, but," she said, pausing slightly, "I think these sorts of things need 'dry cleaning.'" The word 'dry cleaning' was spoken in English. Words that she spoke in English I have kept in my transcripts; they are enclosed within single quotations. Similarly, I have enclosed Greek words which are not easily translatable in single quotations followed by square brackets which contain my clumsy English translation. I have also **boldfaced** words, sentences and phrases which my mother emphasizes. In addition, I have used square brackets to indicate

areas where she paused, laughed, or did not continue with the story as well as in areas where I felt clarification was needed.

My command of the written Greek language is very limited (I think it is only at a grade three level); therefore, I directly transcribed the tapes into English. I found this process to be difficult because the Greek language does not embrace the same grammatical rules as the English language. Therefore, I have translated a phrase such as, "... lots of work these had," to " these had lots of work."

Mother's Filters

During our sessions my mother was always aware that I was tape recording our sessions. If she needed to leave the room for whatever reason she would gesture to me to stop the tape. Usually when we finished our sessions she would ask me to play the tapes so that we could listen to what was said. I eventually realized that my mother was also filtering her stories. This was confirmed one afternoon when I asked my mother if she remembered what types of stories her mother would tell her. At the time, her memory failed her so she turned to my father and passed on my query to him, "Effy wants to know what types of stories you have from when you were a boy. Tell her about the cat."

My father has a sweet tooth. Even though my mother reprimands him for eating candies there are always candies available throughout their home. However, when he was a boy, candies in Greece were a treat. His mother would hide the candies and would only bring them out serve to visitors with an little glass of ouzo. One day my father's need for a sweet got the better of him. He knew that his mother hid the candies but he did not know where. He searched high and low. Just as he was about to give up hope, he spotted

a basket hanging from the rafters. Task at hand, my father set up a makeshift ladder with chairs, stools and pillows and then he proceeded to climb to the top. Being a makeshift ladder, the climb to the basket was a shaky feat. As he reached out to grab hold of the basket the ladder collapsed from underneath him. He crashed to the floor, followed by the basket. Sadly, the basket did not contain the elusive candies but rather the evening meal of fish. His mother had hung the basket from the rafters so that the family cat would not be able to reach it. Knowing that the evening's meal was ruined, he fled from the house – fearful of his mother's wrath. Upon his return his mother questioned him regarding the spilled basket. He feigned ignorance and was not questioned further. Having no one else to blame but the cat, my father's mother (my grandmother) punished the cat. Up to this point the story was full of comical overtones and I merrily laughed along with my mother and father. However, as I slowly started to realize the fate of the cat, my merriment turned to sadness. My laughter dissipated and tears started to trickle down my face. As my tears were sliding down my face, I thought to myself, "There goes my objectivity." My mother turned to me and asked, "Effy are you crying?"

"Yes," I meekly replied, "The poor little cat. It didn't know, it wasn't his fault."

"Go take your shower. You will be late," she replied. As I turned and headed towards the bathroom I heard my mother reprimand my father for telling me the fate of the cat. "Why did you tell her what happened to the cat?" she questions him.

"You told me to tell her the story of the cat," he replied.

"But I didn't tell you to tell her that part," she retorted.

This example illustrates two things. Firstly, that I cannot remove myself from the

subjective elements which are an inherent aspect of human nature. If I were able to take an objective stance, I would have to deny the subjective nature of my existence. Not only would I have to present myself as non-feeling and non-caring but I would see myself and others as static objects.

Secondly, this incident reinforced that my mother was editing her stories. My mother is an active member in her family, communities, and cultures; she acts upon and within these environment. By editing her stories she also acted upon me and the research itself. As an acting and feeling individual she did not approach me from an objective stance. She attached her own subjective biases, assumptions, and attitudes onto me as a researcher but also as her daughter. My mother knows that these stories are a part of my thesis. As such, they will be available to the public – individuals she does not know – to be scrutinized and evaluated. My mother is telling me her stories but all the while keeping her audience in mind. I realized that even though my mother did not feel the urgency to tell her stories, she still felt the need to present them through her own filters.

At the same time, I cannot help but wonder, would my mother have placed the same filters on her stories if someone else, someone who was not her daughter, had asked? My mother and I share a history – a legacy of tensions. As a teenager I rebelled against my parent's cultural values. The smallest comment regarding my friends, dress, and behavior from either one of them would sometimes trigger a hostile reaction from me. My mother's role as a wife and mother is to keep peace within the family. Perhaps she remembers how I reacted to her cultural values and does not want to re-enact this legacy of tensions.

Whose Stories?

My mother's dowry textiles in conjunction with her stories have served as a cultural bridge between my mother, an immigrant rural Greek woman, and myself, the child of this woman born in Canada. The physical distance between these two countries, Greece and Canada, can in fact be used to measure the cultural differences between myself and my mother. We are separated across cultures and generations. It is not easy being a child of two cultural worlds and I am sure, it is not easy to raise children where the borders of two cultures meet. However, this thesis has provided me with some answers to questions which have plagued me since childhood.

I was born in Northern British Columbia in the coastal town of Prince Rupert. I am the youngest of two girls. As I have stated in the previous paragraph, my cultural upbringing contained cultural ideals, symbols and messages from the Canadian and Greek cultures - two cultures which did not always see eye to eye in the upbringing and management of children, especially female children. For a young child learning to function and decipher everyday language and actions, this exercise was fraught with contradictory images and symbols.

My memories of my early childhood are filtered through rose coloured glasses. I had a wonderful childhood. Most Sunday afternoons my family would 'make company' with other Greek families in the countryside. My mother would prepare a picnic lunch filled with Greek favourites such as feta cheese, olives, fruit, and bread. Picnic lunches were a communal effort prepared by the women of our company distributed, circulated and shared by all within our company. We went for walks, we picked sticks, we kicked

rocks. These afternoons were carefree and laughter flowed freely. Birthdays, mine and others, were even more memorable than my memories of our Sunday afternoon rides to the country (see figure 4 & 5). Our living room would be packed with children, running, screaming, crying, laughing. These afternoons were spent with my friends (Greek and Canadian) playing tag, pin the tail on the donkey, and hide and seek. At the end of the afternoon when all the children went home I played with my new toys with not a care in the world.

I learned English at school and through interacting with the English children who also lived on my street. I liked school but because I didn't participate in conversation or activities, I was usually classified as a slow learner. How was my teacher to know that I was shy and did not feel comfortable with this new language. I wanted to be at home with my mother. On rainy days, my sister and I would splash through all the puddles on our way home. Arriving wet and soggy, our mother would quickly change us into warm and dry clothes and then keep us home for the rest of the afternoon. As the years progressed my English skills increased. As I became more comfortable within my Canadian culture, the more uncomfortable it became in my home environment.

Adolescence was a difficult time for me. My parents' cultural values restricted me from attending activities which were readily available to my Canadian classmates: school dances in the evenings, skating on Friday nights, midnight showings of the 'Rocky Horror Picture Show' on Saturday nights, class trips to Hawaii and Disneyland. These events were important to me and my inability to attend fostered in me feelings of alienation and isolation directed at both these cultures. Eventually I developed a sense of not belonging

Figure 4. A Sunday afternoon at the lake. Photograph from the private collection of Antonio and Eleni Katahan (Photographer A. Katahan, circa early 1970's).

Figure 5. A walk in the woods on a fall afternoon. Photograph from the private collection of Antonio and Eleni Katahan (Photographer unknown, circa late 1960's - early 1970's).

to either my Greek heritage nor to the Canadian culture at large.

In order to cope with trying to fit into the larger Canadian culture and at the same time maintain peace with my family, I developed an unconscious ability to rationally negotiate and reconcile these contradictions. I created a sense of 'reality' different from my parent's yet also different from my Canadian friends', but heavily influenced by both.

In retrospect, these two sets of contradictory values encouraged my academic endeavours by further stimulating the questions begun during my adolescent years. My questions and self-reflections were spurred on by my inability to locate myself in what I considered 'reality' to the masses. My graduate work has allowed me to situate myself within a historical and cultural context and thus understand the conditions of my existence. I am fully aware now that I am inextricably linked to a larger web of relationships. I cannot deny, nor would I want to, that I am not only a researcher within an academic setting, but I am also the daughter of immigrant Greek parents, and a Greek-Canadian residing in North America, more specifically Canada. These identities have no fixed borders. They are not like clothing that can be changed to suit the climatic conditions of the seasons. These positions are always informing, influencing and challenging each other and have had considerable influence in the direction this thesis has taken as well as the decisions I make as I partake in everyday life.

My mother does not feel the same urgency to tell these stories. She is quite content to have them remain within the recesses of her memories. I must acknowledge that I am the one who feels a need to tell these stories. Visweswaren's statement, "Even if

my grandmother could read English, she might not recognize herself in these pages," forces me to reflect upon the framing of my interpretations (p. xii).

I have framed my mother's stories within the social, cultural, historical and economic realities in which I participate. Clearly, my social, cultural, historical and economic realities are different than my mother's. My mother was born in a rural village in Greece on the island of Lesvos in the late 1920's. She attended elementary school in Greece until the grade six – whereas I have spent the majority of my life within an academic environment. She did not participate freely in activities that involved both boys and girls. She did not have the luxury of a car, phone, or even the convenience of a shopping mall or grocery store. Her world was comprised of assisting her mother in maintaining the household. Idle hands were useless hands and thus, her hands were never idle. If she was not preparing meals, she was washing or mending clothes. And in the evenings when all her chores were completed, she took up the needle and embroidered her future into pillowcases and sheets.

I, on the other hand, actively participate in social events which involve both men and women. Within a matter of hours, or even minutes, advances in computer technology provides me with virtually world-wide access. I have the world at my fingertips. Education is available to me throughout my entire life span. Career options are available to me. I can be a teacher, doctor, lawyer, nurse, astronaut, engineer, artist, and so. I can also be a housewife and mother if I so choose. Therefore, what exactly does she mean when she tells me she had hoped I would have been married by now? What exactly does she mean when she tells me to hurry up, finish and come home? Why does she not

understand my urgency to share her stories? Why does she not understand my desire to learn? The question still remains: Whose stories are these? Are they mine? Are they my mother's?

Visweswaren reminds me to ask myself, if my mother were able to read my interpretations, would she recognize that these are her stories? I hesitantly acknowledge that I have filtered her stories to meet the needs of my understanding. Embedded within my mother's story is also the story of how I negotiated and created meaning for myself within an academic environment. These negotiations informed my identity but also the shape of this thesis.

Generating Stories

It is ten o'clock in the morning and my mother has just placed a demitasse of thick sweet Greek coffee in front of me. "What do you want for breakfast?" she asks.

"Mom how many times do I have to tell you, I am not hungry first thing in the morning. I'll eat something later – at lunchtime," I reply.

"But you must eat something – anything. You can't start the day on an empty stomach; it will rot. How about some toast with a few olives and cheese?" she asks.

It is too early in the day to resist. I am not in the mood to be stubborn. Today I have told myself is the day I will try and talk to my mother about her dowry textiles. I succumb to her persuasions. Besides, there is something about being in her kitchen that makes me want to eat. "Okay, okay, maybe some toast and olives."

I love sitting in my mother's kitchen. It is big and airy with many windows. From where I sit I can look out into the street and watch the cars drive by, the teenagers smoking on their way to school, the neighbours mowing their lawns or the cats sunning themselves on the driveways. I especially enjoy watching my mother as she putters around in her kitchen. When she is happy she sings along with the Greek radio station or she hums to herself as she cleans or prepares meals.

As she sets the toast and olives in front of me, she asks, "Do you take your vitamins?"

"Yes mom, I take my vitamins," I reply. She is always so concerned about our health.

"Take one of these – it will be good for you," she says as she hands me a multivitamin for people 50 years old and over. I obediently take the vitamin and place it next to my demitasse of coffee. "What do you want to wash it down with – apple juice,

milk, water; there is even that cranberry juice you bought last time – remember?" she asks.

"No, it's okay. I'll drink some coffee," I tell her.

"But it will stick to your insides," she argues.

"No really, it's okay. I do it all the time. Sometimes I even just swallow it without drinking anything," I tell her.

"You shouldn't drink so much coffee," she starts to say, but I cut her off. We have been through this all before.

"Mom?" I take the plunge. "Do you have time today to spend with me. You know, so you can tell me the stories of your textiles?" I ask. I can see her body freeze ever so slightly.

There is a pause and then she says, "Let me see what your father is doing today. He might need some help in Esquimalt."

"Okay," I reply. I do not want to push her. She gets up and leaves the table in search of my father. I am surprised to see how quickly she returns.

"No," she tells me, "He doesn't need me today."

"Oh good. When I finish my breakfast we'll start," I tell her.

My mother currently lives in Victoria, British Columbia with my father. I visit them two or three times a year. As I have already mentioned, since I was a child my mother has told me stories of her life. However, it has only been within the last three years that I have tried to really listen to what her stories were telling, or not telling me. During June of 1997 I focused more intensely on using her dowry textiles as a vehicle to prompt her to relate particular stories. Initially I believed that an unstructured approach was better suited for generating stories. I assumed that I would 'hang out' with my mother and she would spontaneously tell me stories of her life. I assumed that because my

mother knew I was coming specifically to listen to her stories that she would feel the same level of urgency as I did. I quickly realized that my mother was willing to tell me stories – but only when I asked.

During our first few sessions I concentrated on stories about various textile techniques and designs from her dowry textiles. For example, a question such as, "Is this made from silk?" led to a thorough discussion on the cultivation of silk worms:

> *This is from a small, small seed. It was kept in a very warm place. I remember my grandmother sometimes kept these next to her skin* [chest area]. *I don't remember my mother doing it – just my grandmother. After the 'skoulekaikai'* [very small worms] *would emerge, you know like the ones you sometimes see on lettuce – small – very small. Then they would collect leaves to put the worms on; the worms would eat all of these. They would grow and grow and they would become a big 'skouleekee'* [one big worm], *like this* [indicating size with her hand], *and then this worm would not eat leaves. You had to go to the mountains to find branches. These branches would be placed in the same room as the worms. The branches would be placed around* [the room]*; these worms would go on the branch and sit upon them and from their mouths they would produce this white thing. They would make this round thing and they would lock themselves in it. They would circle, circle, circle, circle, circle, circle it. Some would be white and others would be yellow and it would become a thing like a 'kareethi'* [walnut] *but longer, and it would die inside of this. After this, all these cocoons would be gathered, separate the white and separate the yellow. They would be taken to a woman who had a large cauldron. She would put them in the cauldron; they would boil. After they would be placed on a thing that has 'kalamnia'* [rods]. *She would put them in hot water and this thing would turn and become thread. This was a lot of work.*

Asking my mother to tell me stories about textile activities allowed my mother the flexibility to answer as thoroughly, or as vaguely, as she desired. This story exposed me to the social networks developed by rural Greek women in order to cultivate silk worms.

Silk worms were a textile resource which was cultivated, controlled, manufactured and circulated among Greek women. My mother tells me that she does not remember her mother carrying the silk worms against her skin, just her grandmother. This statement indicates that silk worms, as a textile resource, were on the decline. My mother's story does not reveal why this was the case and at the time I did not think to ask her. However, this story indicates that a change had occurred in a female specific area of activity. Stories can be used as a means of identifying gaps in our cultural knowledge.

As our sessions progressed, I asked her to tell me stories of the textiles she brought with her to Canada. Once again, her stories evoked the laughter she shared with the friends she had made in Prince Rupert.

> *When I came to Prince Rupert I met Yioryia. She was a hairdresser. She would say, "Oh Eleni, come so I can comb you. The store is not too busy today." I would go and she would comb me. And then in the evenings, I would say to her, "Yioryia come this evening and we'll go for a 'volta'* [walk]. *We would go to the Italian 'grocery' and buy olives, bread, feta, fresh onion* [laughs]. *Then we would go up where there were some hills and spread the blanket down and we would make a 'picnic.' After, we would go to the store* [my father's shoe store] *and we would brew coffee and listen to Greek music. She was really outgoing. She loved a boy named Christo. 'Yeah' she loved him* ***but we didn't know anything.*** *We would be sitting at the store listening to music and there would be a knock at the door. We didn't know but Yioryia knew Christo was coming. Her mother and father didn't want him because she was a hairdresser. She was a nice girl, not beautiful, but she was a nice girl. Her parents found out and they came and took her back to Terrace* [BC]. *He went and stole her. They had the tickets ready. He took her from their* [her parents] *home and they went to Montreal. They went and got married there. When I came here I liked Canada. Prince Rupert was small and a month after I came Katina arrived. Jimmie* [Katina's husband] *was already*

here. Now Jimmie had a story ...

By asking open-ended questions about the textiles she brought with her to Canada, my mother shared with me what her life was like, what she imaged her life to be and how her life had changed.

However, my mother did not always want to tell me stories. I remember when we were out walking one evening I asked her how many times she had been to Athens before she left Greece. She replied that she had only been to Athens twice. Once was for her physical examination which was an immigration requirement. The second time was to board the plane which brought her to Canada. Her voice trailed off slowly. She then turned to me and said, "I don't want to talk about that. It is sad." Without realizing it, I had reminded her of how difficult it had been for her to leave her family behind. She never saw her father again. He died sometime in the summer of 1971; the year before we (my sister, mother, and I) went to visit[1]. Her statement revealed that to fulfill her aspirations for a better life she had to show courage in spite of her homesickness. There, walking in the rain, I felt my mother's unsaid pain for the very first time and realized the extent of the sacrifices she had made in order to have a 'better life' for herself and create a 'better life' for her children.

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[1]My mother and I have not been back to visit since the summer of 1971. My father visited Greece in 1975 and with my sister in 1988.

Stories

> Women's stories have not been told. And without stories there is no articulation of experience. Without stories a woman is lost when she comes to make the important decisions in her life. She does not learn to value her struggles, to celebrate her strengths, to comprehend her pain. Without stories she cannot understand herself. Without stories she is alienated from those deeper experiences of self and world that have been called spiritual or religious. She is closed in silence. ... If women's stories are not told, the depth of women's souls will not be known (Carol Christ, 1980, p. 1).

What is it about stories that allows us to understand, and sometimes grow to love characteristics such as pettiness or maliciousness in some of the characters? What is it about stories that impels us to steal hidden glimpses into other people's lives? What is it about stories that seduce us into becoming voyeurs? And, what is it about stories that provoke us into feeling anger, despair, annoyance, and happiness for individuals that we will never *really* know?

Within contemporary Western-European cultures, stories are recognized mainly as a source of entertainment. As such, they take the form of live theater, movies, songs, literature (narrative/fiction), and poems. We all have stories to tell; they permeate our lives from the moment of birth to our inevitable passing. They are about ourselves, our mothers, fathers, brothers, sisters, friends, lovers, ancestors, and individuals we have not met or may never meet. Joanne Arnott (1994) accurately points out that stories are not only contained in the memories of our grandparents, in the flames of a campfire, in the text of a two dimensional surface or within the four walls of a movie theater. We need only to

pick up a newspaper, turn on the television, or listen to the radio to know that every life is a story. Stories are told between friends over coffee; they unfold between two individuals who have just met, and they ripple through rooms at family gatherings. How many times have we ever thought, "Wouldn't it be interesting to be a fly on the wall?" or "If these walls could talk?" Stories are a means of articulating our experiences as we journey through life.

However, beneath the surface, stories contain many layers of meaning. They embrace issues of identity, group membership, group exclusion, marriage, divorce, birth, starting school, experiences during school, seeking employment, looking for love, and so on. Stories pass through the undulating borders of both generation and culture. In the process of creating, telling and exchanging, stories transcend the material world and impart profound messages to make us consider the various interconnected relationships in our lives. As such, stories serve to bind us to each other – they become models upon which we base our lives.

Stories are a means of teaching social beings how social life proceeds. They are used as a means of imparting cultural beliefs and traditions through time and space. In his dealings with the Athapaskan Dunne-za (Beaver Indians of Northeastern British Columbia), Robin Ridington (1990) notes, "Band traditions are sustained orally and through personal contact. ... It is a way of communicating important information from one person to another and from one generation to another" (p. 14). As Ridington illustrates, stories have the capacity to bridge the distance between generations.

Recently, writers like Denise Chong (1996) and Joy Kogawa (1981) among others,

are creating stories which have stemmed from their own lives and experiences. Despite their fictional genre, they are political and ideological in content for they explore questions of representation, reality, history, and truth, within multi-cultural settings. At the same time, they demonstrate that no individual stands in isolation. Rather, every social being is continuously involved in a myriad of ongoing and continuously evolving social relationships. Ultimately, these stories point to the complex interdependent web of relationships that underpin all our lives. Moreover, these stories bridge the distance between their mothers and grandmothers – women from different cultural environments – and themselves, children with hyphenated-identities[1]. The stories of their mothers and grandmothers have assisted these writers in understanding their shared history.

I have been greatly influenced by writings that approach stories as situated knowledge produced by situated social beings. Stories allow us to participate in women's lives even though we are not physically interacting. By drawing us into the folds of the written text, stories allow us to know the characters and ourselves more intimately. It is this intimacy, this familiarity, that allows us to transcend the physical boundaries of the written page. Familiarity leads us to understand the implications of the wider social, economic, cultural, political, and historical elements that were in play at the time. Thus, by creating familiarity, stories bring us closer to understanding the dynamics of a specific human being influenced (or even constrained) by the economic, social, and cultural conditions of the time. Through my reading of a story, I am able to participate in and thus

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[1]For example, Chinese-Canadian, Japanese-Canadian, and in my case Greek-Canadian. At the same time, I recognize that not all individuals with multiple cultural backgrounds categorize themselves as having hyphenated identities. This is purely an individual choice.

come to understand their history.

As Methodological Tools

No individual stands in isolation. Rather, every human being is continuously involved in a myriad of ongoing and continuously evolving social relationships (Narayan, 1995; Linde, 1993; Hamabata, 1990; Kondo, 1990; Personal Narratives Group, 1989; Roberts, 1981). Visweswaren (1994) asserts, "... identities are multiple, contradictory, partial, and strategic. The underlying assumption is ... that the subject herself represents a constellation of conflicting social, linguistic, and political forces" (p. 50). From a theoretical standpoint, stories create a theoretical space upon which to consider the interconnected relationship between knowledge, identity, and meaning, within specific contexts. By exposing the inner workings of individuals, stories can bridge the distance between *participating in life* and the theoretical and methodological implications inherent in *studying life.*

According to Behar (1995), "... fiction... is an ideal genre for putting the flesh ... on the anthropological subject..." (p.21). Abu-Loghud (1993) has written stories of particular Bedouin women as a theoretical strategy that works in opposition to the established patriarchal academic discourses. By focusing on the 'particulars', that is the differences among individual Bedouin women, Abu-Loghud intentionally creates a relationship between text and reader, or between the reader and these particular Bedouin women. As Abu-Loghud weaves the text, these women eventually take on human form and thus we come to know them not as 'other' but as individuals much like ourselves.

As Deconstructing Strategies

Personal stories have sharpened our awareness of the oversights, biases, social constraints, generalizations, and stereotyping that exist for women who do not belong to the predominately white culture. For example, Audre Lorde (1982) writes:

> All our storybooks were about people who were very different from us. They were blonde and white and lived in houses with trees around and had dogs named Spot. I didn't know people like that any more than I knew people like Cinderella who lived in castles. Nobody wrote stories about us ... (p. 52, 1986).

Lorde's story is politically orientated. By exposing the existing social biases, she is intentionally addressing the social, historical, and political reality of women who have been marginalized and ignored. Her words are not written for the sake of mere pleasure. By voicing the absence of a community for women like her, her words are dismantling the past and recreating a future that includes her presence, and the presence of women like her. Writings by women of colour[2], lesbians, Third-World women, Fourth-World women and women of hyphenated identities reveal that Lorde's experiences are representative of a large number of women. Lorde is contributing to an ongoing dialogue with other women who have faced the same challenges and experiences. Lorde demonstrates that experience can be turned into knowledge. Women such as Lorde are creating new models that will inspire and assist in the process of overturning women's marginalized status. Stories can be used to create a system of knowledge that arises

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[2]I have borrowed this term from Gwendolyn Etter-Lewis and Michele Foster. They use this as a *temporary* term for they recognize that the English language does have limitations and there are no easy answers to convey the diverse cultural variables that inform identities. I use it here to represent women who consider themselves marginalized.

from and reflects the experiences of women. Moreover, stories can be used to unite women across cultural and generational differences.

"***And the Music Played On***"

When there was a marriage and if you had a child, a boy, you had certain things. The mother had to make them. She had to make a rug. Not very big but big enough to fit in the bedroom, a mattress like a duvet, nicely embroidered sheets and whatever else nice things you wanted to give to help them. These things were made by my mother for my brother. Before the wedding, say about a week, all these things would be washed and ironed and on the day of the wedding these things would be displayed in the room. Guests would come by to drop off gifts and so they got to see these things. They would comment on the nice things you had. After, about 10 o'clock, a mule would come nicely decorated and they would load all the groom's things and they would head towards the bride's home. The young children would walk behind holding all the gifts. They would take these things to the bride. And the music played on. These things would only happen on Sunday. Now these things have changed. The music played on and they would sing, 'Now we're taking the gifts to the bride.' From there again the bride's family and friends would come. When they took the gifts to the bride, the bride had to come out dressed, not in her wedding dress but in a nice dress. For each person she would tie on their arm a nicely embroidered handkerchief. For the horse, she tied onto its bridle a handkerchief, inside was money, she would tie here [indicating around her upper arm], *like a bow. And then from there again you would go and leave all those things. And the bride had other gifts. The groom had to bring gifts to the bride's sister – a nice gift. And say she had how many brothers – a shirt for each brother, a dress for the mother, a dress for the sister if she had one. From there again the bride had a nice 'baklava' – round – a big round baklava. She had a child from her side of the family – she would put a nice tablecloth – the*

baklava was made inside of that one but there was another one empty. The nice tablecloth was placed in this one and the baklava in the pan was placed on top. The child would carry this on his head like that and the tablecloth would hang but they would place a safety pin so he could see where he was walking. They would take the baklava and go to the groom's house. The music continued to play. They would go to the groom's house and they would put the groom inside the empty pan [they would put the groom into the empty pan]. *They would put him in, all his friends, neighbours and family put the groom in the room and dressed him and combed him. They would tease him. They would say 'Rise groom and change, put on your gold because you are going to church.' I don't remember all of it. One person would comb him and another would say, 'No, no the part* [in his hair] *is all wrong.' Another would say, 'I'll comb him now.' Then they would tell him to take off his jacket. He'd take off his jacket and they would turn it inside out. They would take it off again and turn it to the right side. The music played on – it was really nice music. 'Wake up groom and kiss your mother's hand because you are going to church to make another hand. Rise groom and put on your gold because you are going to church to ...' Ah, I have forgotten these sayings and songs. It was really nice the way they did it ...*

My mother's stories contain cultural knowledge bound in tradition. Weddings, Easter, Christmas, and New Year's were a time of celebration and merriment which involved the family as well as the community. These types of activities informed and shaped my mother's identity. At the same time, these stories illustrate that my mother is aware that things are not as they used to be. She says, "*Now these things have changed.*" Through stories that other people have told her and the monthly magazine she receives from Erressos[3], my mother recognizes that the traditions that she remembers are not as heavily

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[3]This magazine contains articles and information regarding current and past activities of the village. It also relays information about those individuals who live abroad, for example marriages, births, deaths, and graduations.

practiced in her village as they were when she was a young girl; that change and transformation are inevitable. The cultural landscape that she remembers from her childhood only exists in her memories.

My mother had maintained some of these traditions, for example she still dyes the Easter eggs red and makes Baklava at Christmas. When I was a child I could never understand why my Canadian friends had brightly colored eggs in blues, pinks, yellows. Ours were only red. Every year I would ask my mother, "Can we dye the eggs with different colors this year?" And every year my mother would say, "But it is tradition." Now I understand the 'tradition.' My mother's stories have enabled me to participate in these 'traditions.' When I was a child I only saw the eggs in relation to the Canadian cultural landscape; my mother's red eggs seemed disjointed set against the rocky shores of British Columbia. My mother's stories have assisted me in situating the red eggs within their appropriate cultural backdrop. My mother's 'tradition' is bound to the activities, people and culture of her childhood. By maintaining a small segment of Easter 'traditions,' she was sharing and imparting Greek cultural knowledge.

My mother's stories allowed me to understand my mother in relation to her rural Greek culture. I have come to comprehend the relationship she developed between her identity and her culture. I further came to understand how this relationship informed her decisions and choices, even to small details such as dyeing Easter eggs. Further, my mother's stories have served as a cultural bridge between my mother and myself; they have united us across our cultural differences.

TEXTILES AND CULTURAL KNOWLEDGE

Textures, patterns, and layers are united through various means[1] to create textiles for various purposes. Throughout this thesis I have been concerned with understanding textiles in relation to culture, in relation to the producers – the women themselves – but more specifically, in relation to rural Greek women and further still, in relation to their Canadian born daughters. For myself, my mother's textiles have served as a means of understanding my Greek cultural values within a Canadian landscape. They have especially played a role in the relationship I hold with my mother. As I stated earlier, they have served as a cultural bridge between us.

Cultural Overview

Textiles[2] figure predominantly in our lives. Not only do they exhibit technical innovations and creative ingenuity, textiles communicate social values, cultural identity, class, occupation, group affiliation, age and personal identity – textiles communicate cultural knowledge. At the same time, textiles reveal political, religious, economic, aesthetic, and personal shifts over time. Through ritual and social exchange, textiles are circulated and distributed among families, friends, cultures and countries. As the contexts of these textiles shift, so too do their function and the meanings that were originally

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[1]This thesis is not concerned with technique. However, there are many modes in which textures, patterns, and layers are united. For an examination of: embroidery techniques see A.Christie (1921), Samplers and stitches: A handbook of the embroider's art; weaving see D. K. Burnham (1980), Warp and Weft: A textile terminology, J. Renzi (1996), Handwoven three dimensional textile forms: A processual study; for textile techniques see A. Seiler-Baldinger (1979), Classification of textile techniques, and I.Emery (1980), The primary structure of fabrics: An illustrated classification.

[2]Within this section the terms textile and cloth are used interchangeably to mean flat two-dimensional objects comprised of natural or artificial fibers. Flat two-dimensional textiles can also be worn as articles of clothing, e.g. sarong or sari, in which case I apply the term costume.

bestowed upon them. But how do we transform the colours, designs, and textures of textiles into the stories of the producers if we do not understand the language of the fabric? How do we decipher the clues contained within the various layers of cloth? This section offers a small glimpse of the ways textiles have been used to understand cultural knowledge.

Women are not the only creators and distributors of textiles. In many societies men are the principle producers of woven textiles. Roy Dilley (1986), approaches the loom space among Tukolor weavers of Senegal as a source of cultural knowledge. Dilley's moves away from the descriptions and classification of loom technology and focuses on the cultural meanings placed on the loom by the culture itself. The oral traditions of the Tokolor weavers indicates that Juntel Jabali, the weaver's mythical ancestor, took the loom away from the spirits and brought it to the weavers. Thus the Tukolor weavers approach the loom as a ritual space in which man and spirit meet. As such, the weaving is considered to be a 'magical act' and the weavers to be 'experts in magic'. The weavers are seen as channels for the spirits to work through. Dilley concludes that the structure of the loom symbolizes the essence of weaving. Perhaps the most important conclusion to be drawn from Dilley's article concerns the maintenance and transmittance of cultural knowledge. Through the recognition of the loom space as being sacred space, weavers and non-weavers participate in affirming, supporting and distributing cultural knowledge.

While in Senegal men are the producers of woven cloth; indigo dyeing in Kodi on Sumba Island is considered to be a 'cult of female secrets.' Jane Hoskins (1988) notes

that this is a specifically female area of activity; taboos forbid men from participating. Secluded in huts away from the community, young women are taught, at stages corresponding to their life cycles, the mysteries of indigo dyeing. Young unmarried women are taught to chew the herbs required to make the dyes; however, they cannot dye cloth until they have reached sexual maturity. Pregnant women and menstruating women are not allowed to go near the dye bath. Hoskins approaches textile production as a temporal process and uses this model to understand the Kodi's beliefs about child birth, gender relations, life stages, and sexuality. As Dilley and Hoskins demonstrate, cultural knowledge can be found within specific spheres of activity. Whereas Dilley focused on the loom space, Hoskin's case examines the process of producing the textile as containing cultural knowledge; participating in the process becomes a means of articulating and disseminating cultural knowledge to future generations of female indigo dyers. Even though women are the sole participants of indigo dyeing, the recognition that these textiles receive within the culture reflect that men and women share and perpetuate the same cultural values and meanings.

Through shared cultural meanings textiles can also communicate and express national and cultural identity on a larger scale. Susan S. Bean (1988), traces Gandhi's use of costume as a means displaying important messages to his opponents and to all Indians. Wearing a simple loincloth he was able to of transcend cultural and linguistic barriers. Through his use of this particular costume Gandhi was able to simultaneously express cultural identity as well as political identity. Bean illustrates that Gandhi recognized that cloth symbolized "dignity of poverty, the dignity of labour, the equality of all Indians, and

the greatness of Indian civilization, as well as his own saintliness"' (p. 369). As such, cloth embodied qualities which were recognized not only by the Indian people but also by Western civilization at large. Through his use of cloth Gandhi visually and consistently displayed his social messages.

Laotian Hmong artists in Thai refugee camps have utilized textiles to create a narrative pictorial textile art (Peterson, 1988). These 'story cloths' depict scenes, stories, and daily activities of traditional Hmong life. Some cloths depict courtship games, procession of the bride to her new home, marriage negotiations, ritual sacrifice, and feasting. Other story cloths depict scenes of villagers fleeing from Vietnamese attack and scenes of daily life in refugee camps (Peterson, 1988). Peterson notes that these 'story cloths' function as a 'social construction of memory.' Images of Hmong life are immortalized within the two-dimensionality of the cloth. 'Story cloths' serve as tangible references to Hmong life. Peterson states, "Older people tend to trace fabricated figures with their fingertips, softly naming memories as they study details of cloths that blur the distinction between 'life as it used to be' and 'life as it ought to be" (p. 14). Located within certain cultural and political landscapes these textiles express particular time periods and experiences, as well as social groups and situations. As tangible objects, these story cloths preserve the cultural memory of the people.

As Hmong story cloths illustrate, though the incorporation of new images and technical innovations, textiles exhibit cultural changes and transitions. Mary Lyn Salvador (1976) examines the *molas* produced by the Cuna women of the San Blas Islands of Panama. Molas are appliquéd front and back panels of Cuna women blouses that are

worn as part of women's traditional dress. Salvador notes that the origins of molas are not known but are thought to have developed from body painting traditions. Through the introduction of new materials such as manufactured cloth, metal sewing needles, and scissors, Salvador is able to trace the evolution of mola designs. Molas designs range from two coloured geometric molas, termed "grandmother" or "old-fashioned" molas, to three coloured geometric with/and/or stylized figures and patterns. Designs vary from geometric patterns to religious, political and recreational themes. Molas are made to wear. However, with the introduction of a tourist market, a new form of molas have evolved – 'tourista molas'. These molas are make quickly and do not reflect the aesthetic and technical displayed on molas worn by Cuna women[3]. Molas that are made for sale exhibit the influence of a new market. As a result molas have taken on different forms: new sizes, pillows, scarves, pot holders, oven mitts. In addition, new fabrics such as silk in pastel colours are being incorporated into the new mola designs and uses. Even though Cuna women do not wear or use these items, tourism has influenced the use and distribution of molas. Thus creative activity that was embedded in cultural 'tradition' evolved to include an economic dimension.

Kutch is one of India's poorest regions. Despite the prevailing poverty, women of this region embroider brightly coloured mirrors onto dowry clothing and textiles. According to Vickie C. Elson (1991), cultural values are maintained through the giving and receiving of a girl's dowry. Items included in the dowry are textiles, jewellery, vessels

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[3] Cuna women comment upon the organization of colour and the execution of design. All areas of the panels must be filled in patterns and/or designs. Women recognize the skill required to produce molas straight lines, filled areas, small spaces, and small stitches.

(e.g. water containers) and other items which she will need to establish her life as a married woman. Kutch women indicate that the embroidered textiles and clothing were the most important component of their dowries. Dowry textiles in Kutch are produced by and distributed among women. Women[4] spend the majority of their free time embroidering dowry textiles for their daughters. Young girls embroider not only dowry textiles for themselves but also for their sisters, cousins, and friends. Elson states that the accumulation, production and distribution of dowry, "gives proof to the girl of her value to her family and establishes the wherewithal for the girl to live up to the expectations she has for her future as a married woman" (p. 63). As Michele Hardy (1996) affirms, the mere gesture of a needle piercing fabric is an intended act; it has a goal and purpose. The fact that girls begin to embroider dowry textiles from a young age indicates that women actively participate in perpetuating cultural knowledge. Like the molas made by Cuna women, Kutch dowry textiles can also be seen to fulfil economic as well as social purposes.

Greek Dowry Textiles

In rural Greece, textiles produced for dowry reveal similar cultural values as those held by the people of Kutch. The size and quality of a woman's dowry traditionally displayed the bride's worth and was a vehicle through which the reputation and the prestige of the bride's family was displayed. Dowry not only included textiles but also items such as land, animals, jewellery, furniture, and money. Regional variation indicates

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[4]That is, female relatives such as grandmother's, mothers, daughters, sisters, and aunts.

that dowry always includes textiles for the home. Textile items considered part of the dowry include dresses, bed curtains, cushion covers, sheets, carpets, doilies, pillowcases and tablecloths. The process of creating and accumulating textiles was a young girl's education in the cultural values accorded to her by her family and culture. These ideal female qualities include chastity, patience, and the ability to establish a successful household which embraced duties such as looking after the family, cleaning and cooking.

According to Salamone and Stanton (1986), in the village of Amouliani during the early twentieth century, the production of textiles for a girl's dowry started for girls at the age of six or seven. Some girls also made lace and fishnet handicrafts which were sold or exchanged for dowry goods from Constantinople (Salamone & Stanton, 1986). The money received was used to purchase linen, cotton, silk, and gold thread which were made into additional articles that would be added to the dowry[5]. The daughters would embroider the cloths the mothers had woven from silk and cotton. These cloths would be made into table linens, sheets, pillowcases, underwear, and gifts for the groom and his family. Older women in Amouliani state that during the Greco-Turkish War (1919 - 1922), this cloth was more precious than gold. Pieces of the dowry would be sold in order to survive and provide food for the family. As indicated by Salamone & Stanton, textile production for a young girl's dowry was an important requirement. Even though Salamone & Stanton recognize that dowry textiles were valued within the culture they do not pursue the importance of textile production in relation to the women themselves.

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[5] My mother tells me that in the days of her grandmother, women would nurture silk worms to make silk thread which was then woven into silk fabric. This silk fabric was used to make for the groom silk sheets and pillowcases as well as the shirt the groom would wear on his wedding day.

Linda Welters (1988), confirms the importance of textiles in the lives of Greek women. One woman she interviewed reminisced, "I remember my father waking up in the middle of the night and yelling out at us to turn off the light because we burned a lot of oil. We had a lot of oil, but he was still complaining" (p. 47). Another remembered, "My mother, when she cooked in the fields [during harvest], she would take her embroideries and she would embroider under the lamp at night. The workers would work all day in the fields and embroider at night" (Welters, 1988, p. 47). These quotes confirm that despite the continual chores women had to perform, they still found the time to create the textiles required for their dowries. Dowry textiles were a priority. This indicates that they were conscious of their social expectations and they strove to attain them through the textile medium that was available.

Textiles produced by Greek women for their dowries embrace social and economic ideals. However, this medium also allowed women to create and surround themselves with beauty in the form of embroidered pillows cases, sheets, tablecloths, decorative woven carpets and rugs, crocheted doilies, and cross-stitched cloths. Some women even formulated a special bond with items they had embroidered. Welters (1988) writes that one woman, "felt that her wedding chemise, which had been embroidered by a professional, was not really 'hers.' She kept it wrapped up so it wouldn't touch the chemises she had embroidered herself when they were all packed together in the trunk" (p. 57).

As evidenced by these limited sources, a vibrant relationship exists between rural Greek women and the production of textiles. It is not merely something that women do.

It fulfills personal, economic, and social needs.

"This Was Your Only Work"

I am very fortunate that I can situate my mother's textiles in her stories (or vice versa depending on your perspective). Therefore, I am able to understand the meaning of these textiles in relation to the culture as well as in relation to my mother and in relation to the relationship I hold with my mother. Within all these levels of interaction, there are various levels of meaning. Our discussions of textile techniques and textile production have always involved stories of her life. This following section presents the stories my mother told me about her textiles. I present these textile stories in order to highlight that the production of textiles fulfilled social and utilitarian needs. My mother's stories illustrate that women consciously participated in this activity. The product, the textiles, was a means of publicly displaying and thus perpetuation of cultural values.

When my mother left Greece to come to Canada she brought with her various textile items from her dowry. With the assistance of her mother she chose the following items to bring with her: one embroidered textile meant to be made into slippers (see figure 1), one saddle cloth (see figures 6), one (Guipure d'Art) networked doily (see figures 7), one large woven carpet, one woven hallway runner, one small woven rug (see figures 8), two sheets and pillowcases, two embroidered geometric pillowcases for sitting room, one embroidered cloth with geometric motifs (see figures 9), two embroidered floral pillowcases for sitting room (see figures 10 - 11), three shadow-worked doilies (see figures 12) with matching coasters, various crochet doilies (see figures 13), one cross-stitched cloth, one silk table runner. She left some textile items behind in her dowry

house. She tells me,

> *... I brought things that fit in my trunk and that I thought I would need... In Greece I have two rugs and a hallway runner I think. I have a 'hramakie meekro' [rug small]. I have some doilies. I don't remember all of them now but I 'think' those types of things. When I go I will bring them back.*

Some of these textiles have been passed down from from my grandmother's dowry to my mother's dowry (see figures 6 - 7). My mother tells me, "*My mother gave me some from her dowry. Either your mother would make these things, your grandmother, maybe your aunts. What else would you do?*"

> *I think this was made by my mother* (see figures 6). *... It is made from pieces, 'scraps.' They are made from 'tsoha'* [felt or wool]. *They used 'tsoha' to make men's coats. ... Look how nice it is . It is all the same but with different colours. ... In the villages they have 'mbaoulo.' How do you say 'mbaoulo'* [trunks] *here? These are made to 'cover;' they put these on them. Some* [women] *might have used it as a 'mbanta.' The couch in the 'family room' was called a 'mbanta.' You would put up above on the wall* [like a banner]. *That was the tradition. But mostly it was used to cover the 'mbaoulo.' The other, I forgot to tell you, was when the girls wanted to go to the summer house. It wasn't far but they had horses or mules. They would throw this on top of the 'samaree' [packsaddle] so you could sit on it. When you passed by they would say, "Oh look at her! What a beautiful rug she had on today when she passed." For 'everyday' they would put them on top of the 'samaree' and ride. Or during the summer there were 'paneeyeeria'* [religious festival]. *The didn't have cars and those sorts of things. They only had 'arambas'* [two-wheeled cart]. *In the summer they would go to the beach and they would put these things on and ride. They would say, "What a nice rug she has." Most especially young unmarried women or young married women. Yes, and if she didn't have a nice rug they*

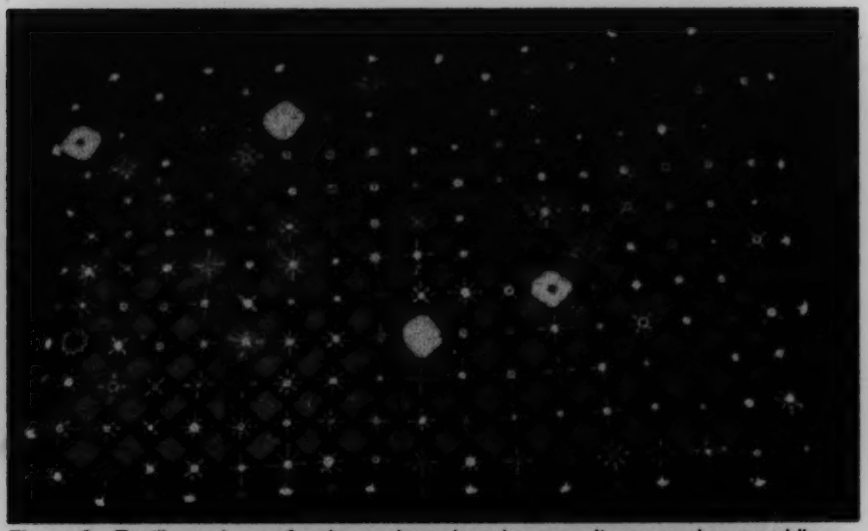

Figure 6. Textile made up of various coloured wool scraps. It was used as a saddle cloth, trunk cover, or placed above the sofa as a decorative banner. From the private collection of Eleni Katahan. Dimensions: L=35", W=21" (Photograph E. Katahan, 1997).

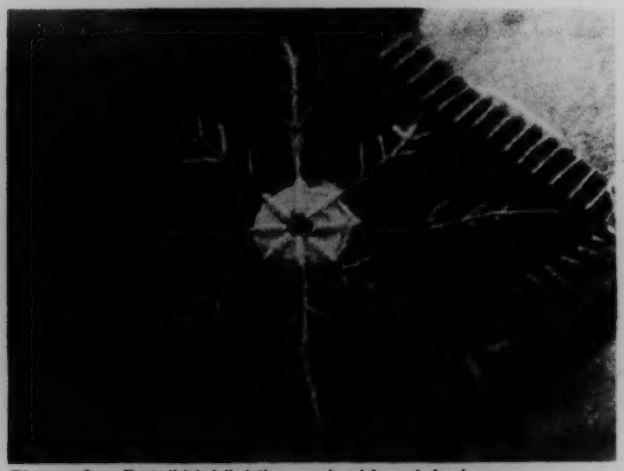

Figure 6a. Detail highlighting embroidered design (Photograph E. Katahan, 1997).

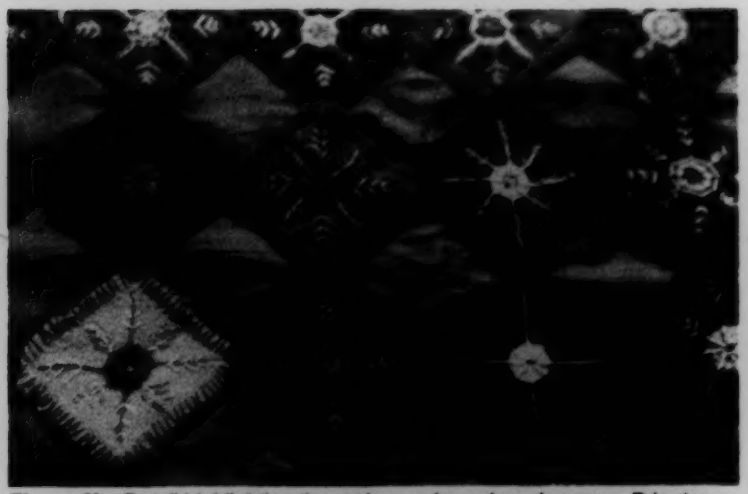

Figure 6b. Detail highlighting the various coloured wool scraps. Prior to assembly each piece is individually embroidered with the same central motif and the edges are blanket stitched (Photograph E. Katahan, 1997).

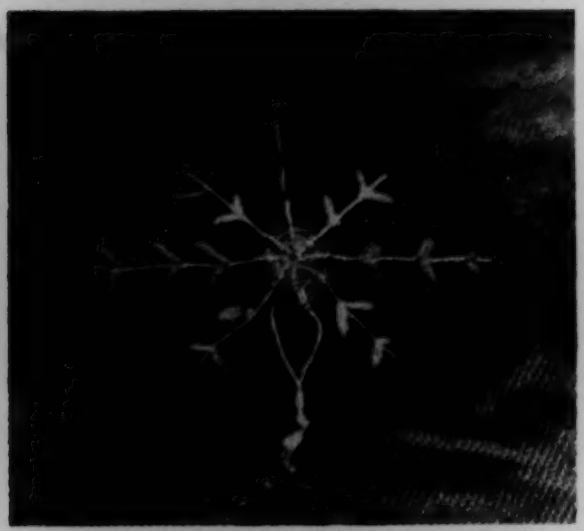

Figure 6c. Various areas around the border are showing high levels of degradation (Photograph E. Katahan, 1997).

would say, "Didn't she have a nice thing to put on?" Because the village was so small and they would always speak of these things. When there were weddings we would say, "Lets go see the bride and see what kinds of nice things she has." If she didn't have nice things [switches to] *she who had nice things people would say, "**Oh, but what nice things she had. How did she make them? What a 'nikokyria' her mother is. What a 'nikokyrio' house this is. What nice things she has made".***

There you turn and turn in the house or you have a friend or neighbour near you. You would go and make company and you would embroider. We would do all the same. Another might have a loom and make a rug and you would go there and she would weave and you would embroider.

These stories illustrate that my mother was very aware of her cultural environment. Women took pride in textile work for personal as well as societal reasons. My mother's stories reveal that women scrutinized other women's textiles for quality as well as for quantity. Women participated and perpetuated social values of the culture through textile production. A woman's ability to produce beautiful textiles reflected her ability to establish and maintain an orderly household. Creating beautiful textiles was an intended goal-oriented act. Women used textiles and textile production as a means of attaining status within their community. Through the creation, distribution and display of beautiful textiles, status was accorded to a woman by other women.

Figure 7 displays a networked doily (Guipure d'Art) made by my grandmother. It was only taken out of the trunk and displayed on special occasions such as at Christmas and Easter. My mother does not remember her mother (my grandmother) making it. She

Figure 7. Type of lace (Guipure d'Art) with relief worked on a net foundation. My mother believes that this was a textile from my grandmother's dowry. My grandmother passed it on to my mother's dowry. From the private collection of Eleni Katahan. Dimensions: L=20", W=19.5" (Photograph E. Katahan, 1997).

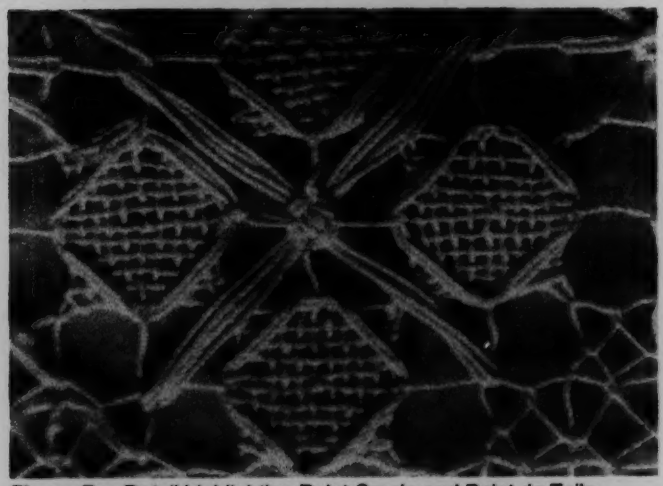

Figure 7a. Detail highlighting Point Crosie and Point de Toile stitches (Photograph E. Katahan, 1997).

thinks that perhaps my grandmother made it as a textile item for her own dowry[6]. She says, "Maybe it is from the time she was married." She continues,

> *After she was married, she did not have time to make these things. She made other things. She wove sheets, pillowcases, fabric for mens shirts – striped blue and white fabric. Your grandmother made all of your grandfather's shirts. She sewed men's underclothing, sometimes she sewed pants. She had a small sewing machine.*

Young girls helped their mothers with household tasks but the majority of the household work fell upon the shoulders of their mothers. They no longer had leisure time to involve themselves in the making of novelty textiles. A married woman had the responsibility of looking after her family. Young girls unmarried girls, unless they worked in the fields, were the only ones who had the time to make luxury items such as floral pillowcases and slippers. In a small community, such as Erressos, young girls did not have many pastimes other than partaking in textile production or assisting their mothers and grandmothers with household tasks. Involving young girls in textile production kept them near their female relatives but also kept them busy.

> *All the girls made these types of things. You would make them to have to lay out in your home. ... You were never concerned about when it would be finished. You had nothing else to do. This was your only work.*
>
> *... These people didn't have jobs to wake up to and go. They didn't have schools. Their minds were on one thing – to embroider, make fabrics, sew, knit. Do you think the village had store where you could get a sweater for your father?*

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[6]It is interesting to note that according to S.F.A. Caulfeild & B.C. Saward (1989) in The dictionary of needlework, this technique was called Opus araneum, Ouvrages Masches, Punto a Maglia, Lacis, and Point Conté. Patterns are found in Vincoiola's book which was published in 1588. It would be interesting to note how many other women from Erressos have these kinds of doilies and how this technique entered this particular village.

You had to get the wool. Your grandmother or your mother made the yarn. The grandmothers and mothers they would wash these wools. They would go to the well and wash and wash and wash. They would wash it really well and then they would be laid out to dry. After that they would spin it [the wool] *into thread. You would go to the 'mbakalees'* [grocer], *it was like a grocery store but there were certain ones that only sold dyes. The 'mbakalee' had a scale and he would ask you how many grams you wanted. "Give me one gram of that, a gram of this, another gram of this, a gram of that." What ever colour you wanted – he knew. He would give you the colours. You would say to him, "I want to make it 'dark green' – very dark green." He knew what colours to put in. He would put in green dye, a little of yellow, and black. He would mix it all up. If you wanted a 'cherry colour,' he would put in red dye, some black and a little yellow. The colour ended up being a 'dark' cherry. If you wanted to make yellow, towards orange, you would put the dye with a little yellow in it. It would become dark. I knew of dyes. We were dying constantly.*

I made this rug when I was twenty-four (see figure 8). *I got the pattern from another older woman – a neighbour. She got it from another woman. My mother made the colours. You would dye the red first. You would wash the vat and then put the other colours in I think. I think this brown is from very little dye and from walnut leaves. When the walnuts grew you would take off this leaf and they would take them and soak them for a few days. Then they would boil these and put a little dye in and dump in the wool. This would turn out a nice brown colour – 'beige.' ... A small carpet you can make in two days if you want. Depends on how many hours you spend in the loom.*

These two excerpts illustrate that my grandmother made dyes from walnut hulls. My mother, on the other hand, was more familiar with commercial dyes purchased from the *'mbakalees'* [grocer]. Koster's (1977) research on weaving in southern Argolid indicates that producing knitted textile items involved time-consuming tasks: washing, drying,

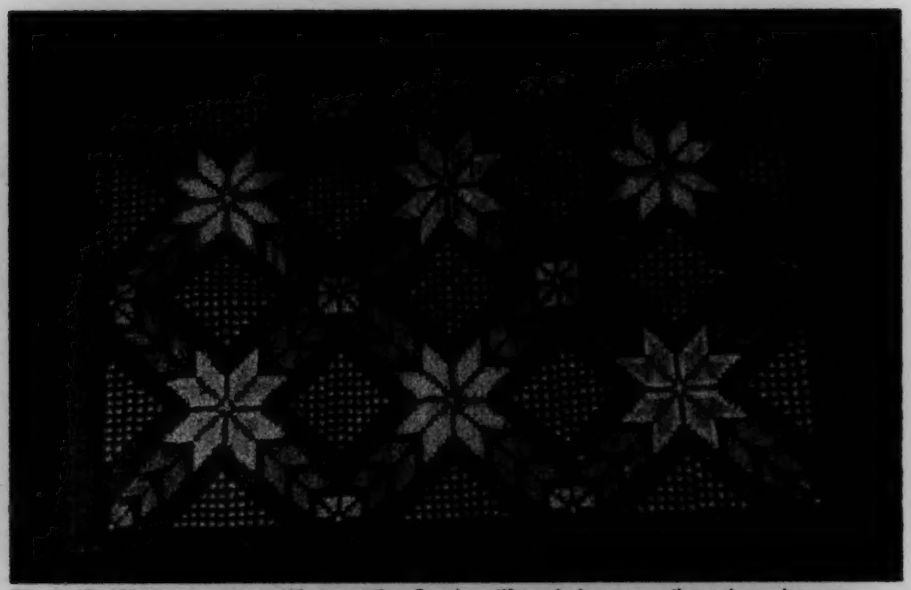

Figure 8. Woven area rug with repeating floral motif made by my mother when she was twenty-four years old. My mother brought with her to Canada textile items which could be easily packed in her trunk. She left the larger carpets which she had made in her dowry house. From the private collection of Eleni Katahan. Dimensions: L=37.5", W=27" (Photograph E. Katahan, 1997).

carding, and spinning the wool. My mother's stories indicate that time-consuming tasks were performed by mothers and grandmothers. In fact, my mother never did learn to spin wool; the wool was spun by her grandmother and mother. Koster states, "Women complain that dyeing with natural materials consumed too much time and firewood, since it was necessary to boil the yarn for hours on the open fire. ... fewer girls are learning the art of spinning and weaving, relying on mother and grandmother to spin the yarn." (p. 13). Thus, the introduction of new textile supplies influenced the production of various textile items. More research needs to be undertaken that traces the design and material influences of textile production in rural Greece.

Textile techniques were not only taught to young girls orally by their mothers, aunts, grandmothers, and other female relatives – learning the textile techniques was a part of their formal education.

> *At school the teacher said to get a fabric. I still remember it. The fabric was 'very light' green. She said we were going to make a slip. How old was I? I think I was in 'grade four I think.' Ten or so – somewhere around there I must have been. So we cut it at school and made a slip. You got to pick whatever colour you wanted. We sewed it by machine. I remember after the teacher made for us a nice rose. It had a branch like this* [draws me the rose]. *I think it was like this. I think mine was a 'rose' coloured. You made a 'zig zag' and then cut around it with scissors and the rose remained on the fabric. ... 'Oh yeah' I wore it. It was nice. ... That was the first I made. After I made a pillow. Maybe it is still in Greece. The teacher told us to buy a piece of burlap. The teacher showed us how to make cross-stitch. I don't remember how I made it now. I remember it was puffy. We made 'zig zag' pattern. I think it was like this* [draws the pattern]. *One colour from here and the other colour here and another colour here. One*

colour inside the other.

Textile patterns were distributed among women. Instructions were passed orally from one woman to the next.

> *I made this one* (see figure 9). *The design was very nice. The other tablecloth has the 'kreenos'* [lilies] *on it as well but it is bigger. A friend of mine named Effy had this one. Her name was Effy because she was born in America. She was called Efftehia but they cut it and made it Effy. She got the pattern from another friend. Effy said that she would give it to me. This didn't have a pattern. I made one corner and then made the rest. This 'maybe' took two months* [to make]. *What else would you do? You always embroidered.*

In most cases, a woman would only have the textile from which to copy a design. For example, my mother knows how to knit but does not know how to read knitting patterns. She can replicate a knitted pattern merely from looking at a design or pattern. My mother understands textile production much like I understand the reading of a book.

This excerpt also illustrates that my mother knew other women who had travelled to America, in this case born in America, and had returned to Greece to live. Effy was my mother's friend. Her presence in my mother's life indirectly influenced my mother's decision to leave Greece and marry my father.

Textiles produced by rural island Greek women have a rather long but underestimated history. Grandmothers and mothers would begin to create and accumulate textiles for a daughter's dowry form the time of her birth: the quantity of these textiles would parallel a young girl's physical growth. It was also a mandatory requirement in their formal education. As my mother said, "This is all we had. This was our education." There were not many options available to young girls from rural island villages. My

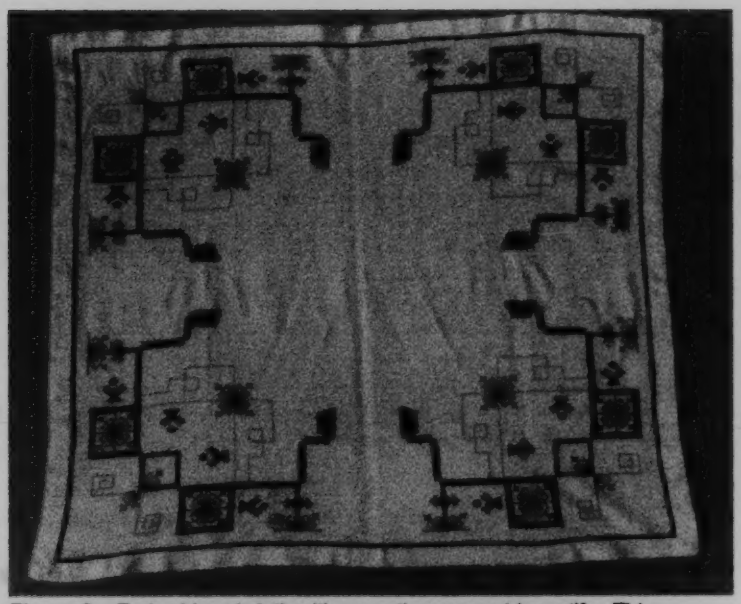

Figure 9. Embroidered cloth with repeating geometric motifs. This pattern was given to my mother by her American-born friend Effy. From the private collection of Eleni Katahan. Dimensions: L=27.5", W=24" (Photograph E. Katahan, 1997).

a

b

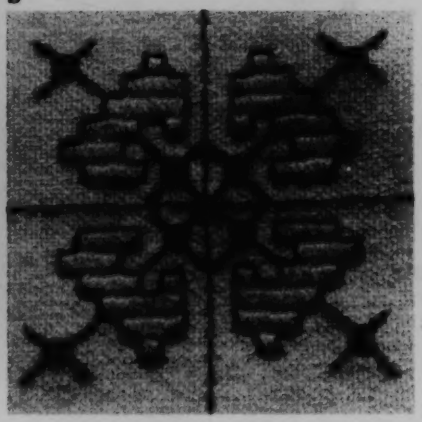

Figure 9 a & b. Repeating motif used to create embroidered pattern (Photograph E. Katahan, 1997).

mother tells me a young girl could continue her education and become a teacher, seamstress, or hairdresser. However, a young girl would have to leave her village and live in Athens to pursue such ambitions. Most girls who pursued their education had members of their families (i.e. brother, sister, aunt, cousin, etc.) already living in Athens. They had family to live with and take care of them thus protecting their reputation and their status within their village community.

Producing high quality textiles for dowries can therefore can be seen as a form of social control, as a means of detouring women from having ambitions of a continued education. Inherent in the process of acquiring, creating and accumulating textiles contributed to the maintenance and sustenance of traditional women's roles. Contrasted with young boys, girls were always engaged in some form or textile production when they were not busy with their chores. Their eyes fixed to the small stitches – their needles quickly darting in and out of the fabric. Not only was their physical labour constrained but also the physical space in which they were allowed to enter. Boys roamed freely from morning till dusk while girls were guarded by watchful mother, grandmothers and neighbours.

Thus, women who did not have the options of pursuing ambitions of becoming teachers, hairdressers or seamstress' used textiles as a vehicle upon which they could attain and maintain status within their village. Through the display of textiles, the curious eyes of watching women would simultaneously confirm the mother's status as a 'nikokyria' and acknowledge a young girl's ability to become a 'nikokyria'. 'Nikokyria' is the status awarded by the community to a woman who maintains an organized and efficient household. Young girls, that is unmarried women, purposely created visually

stimulating textiles to exhibit their skills in textile production and appease the curious eyes of women watching. As a result, female members of the family and community perpetuated the existing patriarchal social structure.

Even though my mother states, "What else were we to do. This is all we had. This was our education," she personally does not consider this activity as being oppressive for women. She thoroughly enjoyed producing textiles. She recognizes good quality work. She would undo and redo sections of embroidered work if she was not satisfied with her stitches. To this day she still marvels at the quality of work she produced as a young girl. Thus, through textile production women were able to express creativity, positiveness, and personal worth within a patriarchal social structure.

At the same time, producing textiles also gave my mother the social freedom to interact with other female members of her community. Even though women perpetuated the existing patriarchal social structure, textile production provided women with a form of sisterhood. A sisterhood which gave women the social freedom to interact with other female members of the community. After the daily chores were completed women gathered in groups to drink coffee and exchange stories or gossip. All the while they would be embroidering, weaving, knitting and so on. Women would exchange and share textile patterns. Friends would keep prized patterns between themselves thus creating friendly competitions between groups of friends. Resources were shared among women. For example, older married female members of the family performed the technical time-consuming and tedious tasks of creating wool. Thereby affording the younger women more time to create aesthetically pleasing textiles which exhibited their technical skills and visual sensibilities.

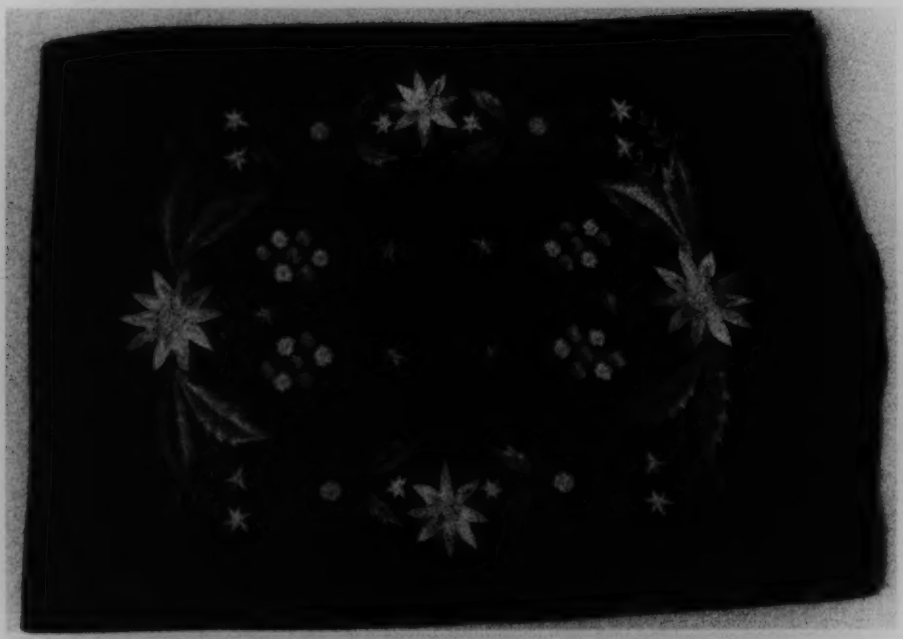

Figure 10. Embroidered floral pillowcase for sitting room. From the private collection of Eleni Katahan. Dimensions: L=25.75" W=23.75" (Photograph E. Katahan, 1997).

Figure 10a. Detail highlighting the highly twisted embroidery floss. My mother has never been able to find this type of embroidery floss in British Columbia, Canada (Photograph E. Katahan, 1997).

Figure 11. Embroidered pillowcase for sitting room. From the private collection of Eleni Katahan. Dimensions: L=26.5", W=26.5" (Photograph E. Katahan, 1997).

Figure 11a. Detail highlighting basting stitches which were used to transfer the pattern onto the fabric. The decorative stitches were laid on top of these basting stitches. They were never meant to be seen. However due to the degradation of the decorative satin stitches they have revealed themselves (Photograph E. Katahan, 1997).

Figure 12. Shadow-worked doily. This pattern and technique was given to my mother by the woman seen in figure 1, who is my mother's cousin. She in turn received it form a 'rich lady'. From the private collection of Eleni Katahan. Dimensions: L=24", W=14" (Photograph E. Katahan, 1997).

Figure 12a. Detail highlighting shadow worked floral motif. Design is embroidered on the wrong side of the fabric with herringbone stitch. Due to the transparency of the fabric the colours show through to the right side of the textile. Design is outlined with a running stitch which is placed on the right side of the textile (Photograph E. Katahan, 1997).

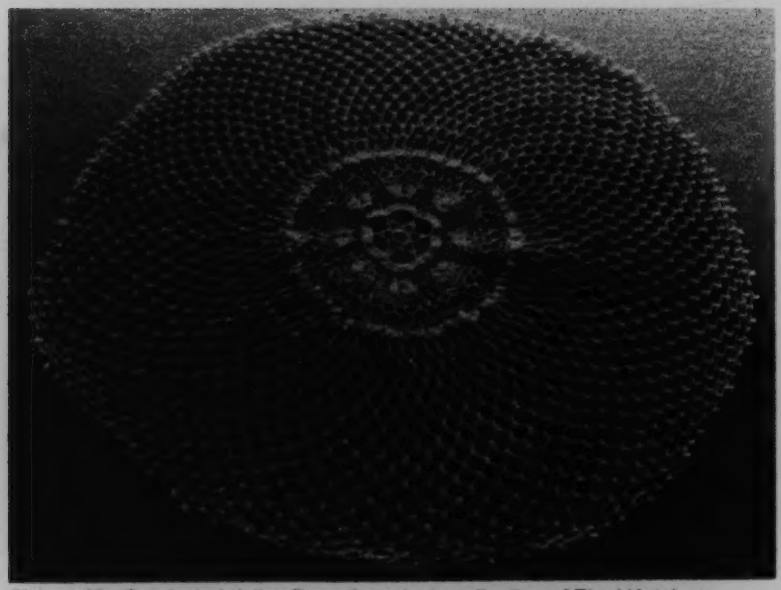

Figure 13. Crocheted doily. From the private collection of Eleni Katahan. Dimensions: L=13.5", W=13.5" (Photograph E. Katahan, 1997).

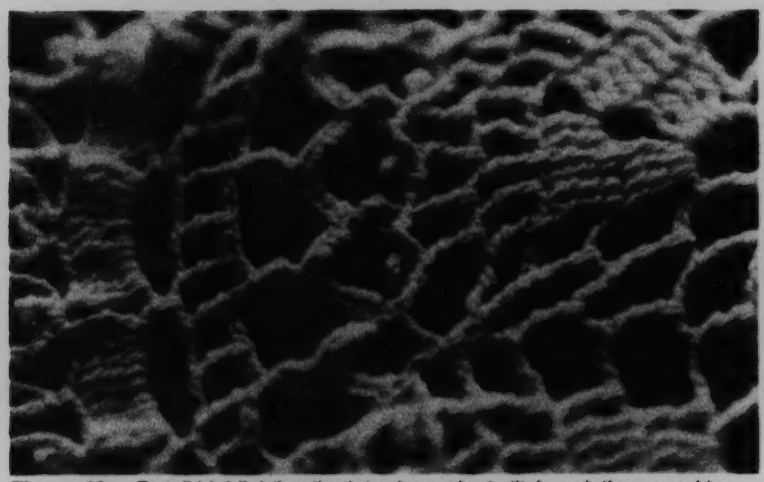

Figure 13a. Detail highlighting the interdependent stitch variations used to create the pattern (Photograph E. Katahan, 1997).

DECONSTRUCTING PAST TRADITIONS

Existing Western Frameworks and Rural Greek Women

Upon entry into graduate school, I eagerly immersed myself in books on theory, culture, and textiles as a means of examining culture and women's lives. Naively, I assumed that the existing academic discourse on Greek women would reflect the stories contained within my mother's memory. As I perused the existing literature I became increasingly frustrated and discouraged; I was unable to locate the experiences of Greek women, Greek immigrant women and first generation Greek-Canadian women in the limited existing studies. This chapter examines the available English literature on rural Greek women and immigrant Greek women in Canada. My aim is to identify areas which have not been addressed.

Anthropologists of the past placed their efforts on studying rural Greek communities in terms of community organization, gender differences, and family structures. The responsibilities and occupations of males within these structures formed the nucleus of these inquiries (Campbell, 1964; Peristiany, 1966). Two interrelated schools of thought arose out of these early concerns. Both focused on the moral standards that dictated the behavior of Greek men and women.

Honour and Shame

The first, the honour and shame framework, used the concept of honour as the template for measuring the "...ideal moral characters of men and women; these are the manliness of men, and the sexual shame of women" (Campbell, 1964, p. 269). Virginity

was considered the ideal physical state prior to marriage for females. Upon marriage, women maintained this ideal by remaining virginal in thought and expression. Since honour was bestowed by friends, family, and neighbors, a woman maintained and protected her honour by adhering to the ideal patterns of female behavior accorded to women: modesty, virginal manners, and serving the needs of others. Young unmarried girls were not to run but rather walk with slow deliberate steps with their backs straight and their eyes downcast. According to Campbell (1964), "If, by evil chance, she were to fall backwards 'with her legs in the air' she would virtually lose her honour" (p. 287). Greek girls were expected to remain virgins until they were married; a young girl who exhibited the ideal female patterns of behavior had a better chance of attaining a husband of greater social standing (Gage, 1971).

In symbolic terms, unmarried girls were equated with the biblical 'Eve' who tempted Adam with the apple which eventually led to their eviction from the Garden of Eden. As 'Eves', women were seen as being physically and morally weak and therefore easily deceived and incapable of resisting the advances of men.

According to Juliet du Boulay (1986), women by nature were fallen and by destiny redeemed. Women were vulnerable to their own sexuality and therefore they were required to be, at all times, subordinate to male authority. Du Boulay, speaking specifically about rural women in Greece, states that a woman could control her shame by placing herself under the authority of her father, and eventually her husband. Such an action granted women protection and redeemed them from inherent elements that threatened to destroy them.

Marriage was the vehicle by which women were led down the path of redemption and overcame their affiliation with 'Eve'. According to Du Boulay, "... there is a paradoxical change from being 'Eves' to being linked ultimately with the greatest feminine archetype of their cosmology – the figure of the 'Mother of God'" (1986, p. 144). Women gave birth and nurtured the children, prepared the food, carried the water, remembered the dead, performed the ritual activities of the saint's day, and were responsible for the fasts. Hence, women connected to the house became ultimately connected to the mysteries of birth and death, salvation of the dead, spiritual protection for the living, and thus to the figure of the Mother of God. In essence, the house became heaven on earth. Du Boulay states that women did not deny their inferiority but rather transcended it by aspiring toward the greatest feminine archetype – the 'Mother of God'.

Private/Public

The second model attempted to explain gender inequalities in terms of separate arenas of activity – public and private. Women's ability to bear children forced them to remain within the domestic spheres of activity. Men, on the other hand, were free to roam within the more prestigious public and economic arenas. According to Pavlides and Hesser (1986), the domestic realm was a place in which men wash, eat, sleep, and change their clothes. The public square or the coffee shop is where men found company, entertainment, exchanged information, conducted deals, sought employment, hired laborers, participated in storytelling, played backgammon and cards, danced, and sang (Pavlides & Hesser, 1986). Women did not enter the public realm unless absolutely necessary. Friedl (1986) writes that the public square functioned as a thoroughfare and as

such was not closed to women. She states:

> ... [women] walk through it on their way to and from the fields, or on their way to church ... But no female over the age of fourteen, in the ordinary course of events, goes to the [public square] as a final destination. They do not sit in the coffeehouses; they do not even go to the store connected with the coffeehouses to make purchases. Nor will they buy from itinerant vendors when these vendors are in the [public square]. On ordinary days, then the [public square] as a public place, is a male place (Friedl, 1986, p. 43).

Women only entered the public square upon the occasion of a celebrations such as weddings, Christmas or Easter. On these occasions women were always accompanied by their husbands or male relatives (Friedl, 1986; Pavledes & Hesser, 1986).

Salmone & Stanton (1986) profess that in the establishment of the household, a woman achieved equal power with the husband. Both men and women achieved public prestige and social equality from the success of the household. Men generally worked outside the home, while the women were frequently bound to the home with domestic duties. However, equal power did not entirely imply equal responsibilities. Family honour rested upon the community's perception and recognition of the successful management of the household. Women contributed to the success of the family from within the home. They had the ongoing responsibility of caring for the family, sewing, mending, weaving, embroidering, feeding the chickens, tending the vegetable garden, fetching water, baking bread, and washing cloths. Women often achieved public prestige equal to or greater than that of their husbands. A woman's happiness and her sense of self worth depended largely on her achievements of the ideal housewife (*nikokyra)* and the prestige placed upon her by the community.

Within the domestic sphere, women were responsible for the nurturing of their children. It was the mother's responsibility to feed and clothe her young and also to instill in them social cultural values. One of the mother's main objectives was to instill in her daughters the qualities of the ideal wife and mother. Becoming a *nikokyria* began at birth and continued throughout the entire life span. At an early age a young girl was taken under her mother's wing and together they would begin the creation and accumulation of the daughter's dowry. Items which were considered a part of the dowry included dresses, bed curtains, cushion covers, sheets, doilies, napkins, handkerchiefs, night clothes, blankets, table cloths, and carpets. Through the creation and accumulation of the textiles for the dowry, a young girl received her training in the ideal female qualities that were accorded to her by the community. These ideal feminine qualities included chastity, patience, and the ability to establish and maintain a successful household which entailed duties such as cooking, tending to the family's needs, cleaning, and so forth.

I know from my mother's newsletter she receives from Erressos and my father's visit to Greece in 1988, that her village has undergone considerable change. Textile production, for example, is not as heavily practiced as it was when my mother was a young girl. Young girls now complete their secondary education. The existing frameworks, honour and shame and public vs. private need to be updated. More research needs to be undertaken which addresses contemporary definitions of honour and shame and the lines between public and private areas of activity are not as rigid as this framework implies. There is little, if any, information on the influence of tourism, migration,

and the lines between public and private areas of activity are not as rigid as this framework implies. There is little, if any, information on the influence of tourism, migration, immigration, mass communication, and feminism on women themselves and how these influences are reconciled and integrated into their everyday lives. What implications do these influences hold for the traditional values of the women? What is created at the juncture of these boundaries? What implications does this have for the maintenance of the household? What does this mean to the 'chasteness' of the women and the virility of men?

"What Else Would You Do?"

Either your mother or your grandmother, maybe your aunts, would make these things. What else would you do? There the village was small; you would wander around the house or you have a friend or neighbor near and you would go and make company and you would embroider. We would all do the same. One might have a loom and make a rug and you would go there. She would weave and you would embroider.

... When there was a wedding, we would say, "Let's go see the bride and see what kinds of nice things she has." If she [the bride] *had nice things, they would say,* ***"Oh, but what nice things she had. How did she make them? Her mother what a good 'nikokyra'*** [mistress of the house] ***she is. What nice things she made."*** *If a girl didn't have nice things they would say, "'****anikokyra****'* [untidy/messy housewife], ***what did she do all day."*** *Understand? But little or a lot they all had something. Some had really expensive things and some had the poorest.*

... There were bad girls. I am not saying there were not any but those that had families like that might have a brother in Athens. They would leave and go wander/carouse around there but the good girls ***would not*** *leave from their*

homes. They would stay near the father and the mother. If they had brothers and they were seen doing something they would be beaten. "Hey you – where were you today? With whom did you speak with today?" 'Yeah' [laughs] *because if they heard that one girl wanders/carouses the streets from there they wouldn't respect her as a person. They would say, "What am I going to take her? She wanders from here to there all day." Understand? ... Boys are boys. If they go with a girl they won't get pregnant like the girls. In secret there probably was those things going on. The village would talk. In Greece a good family looks for a good family to give to their child. It doesn't matter if it is a boy or a girl. I'm going to ask for this child because they are from a good family. The mother is good and the father is good and hardworking. They are good people. Perhaps the girl doesn't have a large dowry but she will have something. Maybe a simple house, a small orchard – she will have* ***something****. Her brother maybe has sheep and he would sell his wealth and buy something for his sister. You know some children* [male] *if they had sisters, it wouldn't matter how old they were they wouldn't get married until their sisters got married first. Because it is 'more important' to marry the girls first. ... Some girls didn't have money but their fathers would do something for them. They would work in the 'kapnos'* [tobacco] *or they would look after a few sheep. They would do something – do something good. Whoever wanted a better life with whatever strength they had would give the girl a little house. The girl would make all her things.*

... in the village they knew, they would say Vasili Mosxou's [my mother's father] *daughters have never gone out. Your father wrote his brother, Yorgio, and said, "Our mother mentioned so and so's daughter. What do you think." And he said* [Yorgio], *"Yes, they are good. They are 'nikokyries'* [good housekeepers]. *They have never been out." Your father said, "Maybe she had gone to Athens?" And he replied, "No, she had never gone." And after, I sent a picture* (see figure 14) *and then he said okay. I knew about it. And then after, we made the engagement. ... They* [her parents] *asked me. What was I to do, Effy. They said it*

Figure 14. Picture of my mother sent from Greece to my father in Canada Her engagement was arranged by both sets of parents in Greece. They became engaged in July; she was in Greece and he was in Canada. She had been engaged for almost nine months by the time she boarded the plane to Canada - April 1962. Approximately one month prior to her departure she laid out her dowry textiles (see figures 6 - 13) in her mother's house. Throughout the afternoon her friends and family came by to wish her well. When the final visitor left, she packed her trunk with the dowry textiles she thought she would need in Canada. Photograph from private collection of Antonio and Eleni Katahan (Photographer unknown, circa late 1950's - early 1960's).

is good there where you will go. It is America. You will pass your time good. Your father's family is good. And so, your father sent money to make the rings ...

I know from my mother's life that women's activities were not always contained within the home. When my mother was twelve years old she was sent to the local seamstress to refine her sewing skills. The seamstress was in her mid-thirties, unmarried and had moved to my mother's village to earn money from the sewing skills she possessed. Even though these activities were traditionally kept within the domestic sphere, they were now playing a role within the more prestigious economic domain of men.

I went to a seamstress. There were two girls who came from another village named Klomari. One was named Dzinnie, she was the eldest, and the other was named Margaro. They were not married but they were older. They were good girls. ... One had passed thirty – maybe she was thirty-five? I read in the magazine that she got married in Australia. They lived a little further from our house. My mother said to me, "Go for a little while and learn a little." I think I was twelve. I went when I finished school. ... She made up the patterns. She would take your measurements – how much was your bust, how much was your waist. She showed me a little but how am I to remember now? ... Sometimes she would take me and maybe one of the other girls to the fittings. ... I made really nice buttonholes – the small buttonholes. In the past the dresses didn't have zippers; they would close together with really small buttons. They got me to make the buttonholes because I did a good job.

The private vs. public framework does not address what implications this economic dimension held for the traditional values of women. What actually transpired that allowed Dzinnie and Margaro to cross into an economic area of activity? What was created for them at the juncture of these boundaries? Did this influence hold any implication for the maintenance of the household and 'chasteness' of women?

My mother also tells me that girls from poorer families worked in the fields in order to make money to be set aside for their dowries. The following excerpt illustrates that dowry textiles were so important that women threatened their reputation within their community to make money to buy the materials needed to make these items.

> *I embroidered in the summer. Those women that had the time embroidered, some knitted or crocheted. Those that wanted to work went to work. In the 'horafyïa'* [fields] *boys and girls worked together.* [I comment, "I thought that women were not supposed to work with men.] *I know – but they needed the money. What else were they to do? If a girl didn't have money to buy embroidery thread, to buy linen to make sheets, what would they have done? Each girl had to have these things.*

I know that my mother's decision to marry outside of Greece was greatly influenced by the stories her father told her. When he was no more than twenty-two years old he left his wife and young son and traveled to America to seek his fortune.

> *I knew what it was like in America, my father would tell me. At first he worked in a restaurant. He worked hard. After that he worked at a place where they made leather and then after that he got sick. I don't know what he caught in all that water he worked in but he would tell me what it was like, the restaurants, the stores, the refrigerators, the homes. He would tell me ...*

He was gone for thirteen years in which he corresponded to his wife via letters. When my mother's father returned to Greece he purchased a large field where he cultivated tobacco and potatoes. After his return he fathered two more children, my Thea (Aunt) Szmenie and my mother. My mother grew up listening to her father's stories of his adventures in America. His stories provided her with the opportunity to experience a life other than the one she faced if she stayed and married in Greece. Many young men, like my mother's father, left their villages in order to 'find a better life.' My mother tells me,

> *... slowly, slowly one young man would leave for Congo then he would send*

papers and bring his brother and then maybe another brother. This way the entire family left.

Women also left in search of a better life. A few returned after a few years of living and working in America. Those that returned brought back the luxuries of another country.

Lots of girls left – to America, Australia, Congo, Athens. Girls were constantly leaving so they could have a 'better life.'

... Yramatiki ... her family went to America. Before I came here they returned from America. She had learned a little hairdressing. She wasn't that 'orea' [good-looking] *but she had a good heart. She got engaged to a second cousin. Her mother* ***but what didn't she bring from America****. Truck full of crates. She decorated the entire house with American things. She even brought things for the wedding. Even the pots to cook food she brought from America. She worked in America as a hairdresser I think. When she came they had the wedding at the ocean – a big wedding. They even put a fabric from the house, I don't know how long, so the bride could walk.* ***Everything was brought from America – even the groom's shirt.***

My mother was not only exposed to her father's stories but she was also present when the female sojourners returned from America. She was able to see the riches from America which they brought with them. She was able to see with her own eyes what a 'better life' actually meant.

However, not all the families returned. Many stayed and made these foreign lands their new homes. As a result, there were not many young eligible men in the village. The ones that remained were mostly farmers who toiled in the hot sun. She knew that if she married one of them she would work alongside of him. She never worked in the fields, but by witnessing how other girls from her village toiled in the sun, she knew that it was physically exhausting work (see figure 15).

> *They didn't want to work in the fields. In the summer the heat is so high. They would tie a kerchief around their heads, they would wear gloves on their hands, long sleeves because the sun, you know how the heat is.* ***To sit all day in the sun.*** *One man, or two, would plant acres sometimes acres full. The girls would go ... with a watering can to each hole with tobacco and water so the roots would take. When they finished the tobacco that would grow a little they had to get a hoe and dig a little. They would go and cut the leaves ... They would go early early ... In the village what were they to do. ... In the summers they would work in the fields picking tobacco. When they finished the tobacco they would gather figs. ... They had so many chores to do ... There was a factory by the ocean where the figs would go to be made into small packages. I have never gone ... the girls worked hard in Greece.*

My mother consciously made decisions whether to conform, deviate, change or alter the direction of her life. Stories of her father's experiences in Greece in combination with stories of other woman and men who immigrated to other parts of the world, informed my mother's decision to leave Greece. She knew that her options were limited if she stayed in her village. "*My family told me that if I got one* [man] *there, they would have me in the fields.*" She wanted a better life than working in the fields, cultivating tobacco under the sweltering sun. She knew that a 'better life' required that she leave Greece and travel to another country where there was an eligible man awaiting her arrival.

Figure 15. Property belonging to my mother's family in Greece. Traditionally property such as fig groves were a part of the dowry a woman brought with her into marriage. Other items might include sheep, goats, money, furniture, jewellry, clothing and textile items to embellish the home. These items were important in the establishment of a newly formed household. This photograph illustrates the dryness of the summer months in Erressos. Photograph from the private collection of Angela Katahan (Photographer A. Katahan, 1988).

"I Made Them and They Could Just Sit There"

From my mother's textiles I have learned that material objects are situated within cultural and social contexts. I have used my mother's dowry textiles to understand the relationship she held with her rural Greek culture and how this relationship informed her choices, decisions, and identity. However, textiles cannot be understood in isolation. They do not outwardly display the relationships between people, environment and culture. This thesis has maintained that stories told in relation to the circumstances surrounding the production of textiles do provide insights to cultural beliefs and values that inform the construction of identity. Stories my mother has told me regarding her dowry textiles, reveals that her dowry textiles do reflect the options that were available to her, the choices she made, and the reasons underlying these choices. Moreover, comparing the production of textiles (or lack of) between one mother, my mother, and one daughter, myself can provide insights to how cultural values are transmitted, maintained, and altered across cultures and generations.

As I have already mentioned, my mother's dowry slippers textile remain as she had completed it almost 40 years ago (see figures 2). Our discussion of this particular textile revolved around the selection of colours and the type of embroidery threads which were available in Greece but which are not in Canada. For my mother this textile is a textile which reflects her aesthetic sensibilities and technical abilities. She created it because she loved to embroider bright floral patterns. However, through the stories my mother has told me this textile is more than a display of beautifully embroidered flowers. Earlier I asked, why did my mother produce and accumulate dowry textiles only to leave

them behind? What transpired in her life to allow her to make such a decision? If the eventual products, the textiles, were not important then what was? My mother's stories have enabled me to penetrate the three-dimensional structure of the cloth to discover that there are cultural ideals embedded within the fibres of the cloth.

Dowry textiles were made and distributed by women and between women. Dowry textiles included household items needed for the establishment and maintenance of a newly formed household. These textile items would include sheets, pillowcases, rugs, mats, tablecloths and so on. The amount of textiles produced by a young woman and her mother displayed to the culture, but more specifically to the women, a woman's ability to maintain a tidy and organized household. The production, accumulation, and distribution of textiles served as a means of attaining status within the community. Status was awarded by and for women but by extension, recognized by the male population of the community. By decorating everyday items such as saddle bags, women consciously sought out opportunities to displayed to the curious eyes of women watching, their ability to create and maintain a successful household. Women actively participated in perpetuating and maintaining the cultural values of the community.

"What else would you do," my mother tells me, "you continually embroidered." Producing beautiful textiles for her dowry, was a vehicle upon which my mother used to achieve, or attain, status within her community. My mother tells me, " These people didn't have jobs to wake up and go to. They didn't have schools. Their minds were on one thing, to sew, to knit. These are the only things we had. This was our education." There were other options for women. They could pursue ambitions of becoming

seamstress', teachers or hairdressers. My mother did not have relatives in Athens to stay with so therefore these options were not directly available to her. She could have 'roamed' the streets but then she would not have been valued as a 'person'. She consciously made the decision to take on the cultural values that were held in high esteem by her community. My mother's education was to become a 'nikokyria'. With the textile medium that was available to her, my mother vocalized her ambitions and goals of being a 'nikokyria'. Recognition as a skilful embroidered, within her circle of women, advanced her status as being a 'nikokyria' and confirmed her good family's reputation. My mother enjoyed creating textiles because it kept her busy. She even says, "You had nothing else to do. These were the things that girls enjoyed." At the same time partaking in this arena of activity marked her status within her community as a 'nikokyria'.

My mother's decision to marry outside her village was heavily influenced by two factors. My mother's reputation was secured by her father's success in his business, her mother's success in the maintenance of the household, and her success in her production of textiles. Her family as a whole had achieved the reputation of a 'good family.' Being of a good family, my mother and her sister did not wander the streets, they did not live in Athens, and they did not work in the fields. Rather my mother was accustomed to a comfortable standard of living. She was taken care of financially by her father and physically by her mother. If she had stayed and married in Greece she would have been working alongside of her husband in the fields. Her parents told her, "If you got one there [in Greece] they would have you in the fields working from here and there. It is good there where you go. It is America." At the same time, she had heard the stories of

father's adventures in America and she had witnessed with her own eyes the riches brought back to her village by sojourners. She knew that in order to maintain the standard of living provided by her mother and father she would have to marry outside her village.

Producing textiles was a goal oriented activity. By partaking in textile production, my mother vocalized to her community her desires, ambitions, and goals. Through the production of textiles women were kept busy but all the while they reflected values accorded to women by the culture but reinforced by women. My mother wanted to be recognized as a 'nikokyria.' This recognition would secure my mother's desire to marry an 'emperor' – a husband who did not toil in the fields all day but rather a husband who engaged in 'light jobs.' At the same time, my father wanted a 'nikokyria.' He wrote to his brother and asked about my mother's reputation. He was told that she was a 'nikokyria' and had never been out, not even to Athens. The village was small. People knew that my mother stayed close to her family. They knew that she did not work in the fields during the summer. Rather she spent her summers embroidering and helping her mother with her household tasks. "What else would you do. You continually embroidered." Indirectly, my mother's dowry textiles paved the way for her life in Canada. My mother married an 'emperor' and my father married a 'nikokyria'; both their desires were fulfilled (see figure 16).

Figure 16. 'Emperors' Antonio and 'nikokyria' Eleni Katahan in front of their shoe store in Prince Rupert. My mother would help my father in the shoe store. She eventually learned all about shoe sizes, ringing up shoe sales, adding appropriate sales taxes, taking cash, and giving correct change. From the private collection of Antonio and Eleni Katahan (Photographer unknown, circa early 1960's).

The Greek 'Experience' in Canada

The English literature available on ethnic groups in Canada deals with integration patterns of predominant ethnic groups such as British, French, Italian, and Ukrainian. Ethnic groups such as the Greeks are only now slowly starting to be examined by scholars interested in the phenomenon of multiculturalism. The few earlier studies tend to be descriptive and focus primarily on the immigration patterns of the Greek men. In these studies, if immigrant Greek women are mentioned they are discussed in relation to their husbands, fathers, and/or sons.

The earliest publication available on Greek immigrants in Canada was written by George Vlassis in 1942. This is an amazing book filled with thousands of entries regarding specific Greek individuals throughout all of the Canadian provinces. Vlassis has painstakingly compiled lists upon lists of factual information regarding where these individuals came from, how and when they came to Canada, organizations they were a part of, and businesses they owned. However, the majority of this information pertains to Greek men – their origins and accomplishments. Greek women are only briefly mentioned in relation to the *Greek Canadian Ladies Society*.

A very small annotated bibliography on Greek immigrants is presented by Andrew Gregorovich (1972), in Canadian Ethnic Groups Bibliography. There are fourteen entries pertaining to the Greek immigration experience in Canada. All this information is priceless. However, the most recent entry is dated 1970. This bibliography needs to be updated to reflect contemporary writings of not only Greek immigration experiences but also Greek-Canadian experiences in Canada.

Peter Chimbos is one of the notable scholars regarding Greek immigrants – specifically immigrant Greek men. His book (1980), entitled The Canadian Odyssey: The Greek Experience in Canada is one of the only books existing on immigrant Greek experience; an entirely descriptive book which focuses on the experiences of men. As a demographic study it focuses on background information and cultural characteristics of male Greek immigrants; patterns of settlement, family life, and the types of employment opportunities available to immigrant Greek men.

Leonidas Bombas (1982), has compiled an annotated bibliography of literature available on the Greeks in Canada. This bibliography contains seventy entries of various studies on various aspects of Greek immigrants in Canada. Contained within this book are references to published and unpublished articles, reports, papers, theses, and books. The majority of these entries are concerned with Greeks residing in Montreal and Toronto and focus on economic situations, immigration patterns, and family relations. There are no entries dealing specifically with immigrant Greek women's experiences upon their entry into Canada.

Immigrant Greek Women in Canada

Immigrant women have long been a part of the Canadian cultural setting (Burnet, 1986; Makabe, 1983; Vlassis, 1942). However, their experiences as immigrants, as ethnics, and minorities are only now being deemed important aspects of our multi-cultural Canadian mosaic. Even though English studies regarding the experiences of immigrant women are slowly emerging, there is still little information regarding the experiences of immigrant Greek women in Canada. Further still, there is little or no

English information available regarding the experiences of the children of immigrant Greek women born in Canada, their roles and identities within Greek-Canadian culture and how these roles and identities might conflict with the 'traditional' values of Greek society.

Polyzoi (1985), in an article entitled, "Reflective Phenomenology: An Alternative Approach to the study of the Immigrant Experience," explores the concept of assimilation from the perspective of immigrant Greek men and women. Looking for tacit dimensions of experience, she rejects the tradition of psychological empiricism that views the "... immigrant as a passive product of environmental influences" (1985, p. 49) and thus also rejects approaches to the experience of assimilation as a linear end-product. Looking for tacit dimensions of experience, she adopts a more process-oriented approach in which assimilation is viewed as a "continuously transformative process" (p. 67). Using open-ended interviews, she interviews men and women regarding their experiences of assimilation in Canada. She identifies "strangeness" as a tacit dimension of assimilation. From this concept, three perspectives of the immigrant experience emerge: concept of strangeness upon arrival; the immigrants' cultural perspective; and the concept of strangeness reversed.

Using direct quotes from her interviews, Polyzoi transcends the two-dimensionality of the written page and presents her interviewees as human beings situated in a particular time and place, carrying out everyday activities, and adjusting to the challenges of their new environment. This article demonstrates that quantitative demographic studies, which utilize questionnaires or surveys, are not equipped to uncover

the human dimension of the immigrant experience. Further still, this article reveals that more work needs to be done regarding the process of immigration and experience. Issues such as dislocation, assimilation, adjustment, retention of traditional cultural values, integration of new cultural values, and transmission of new and traditional cultural values to their children need to be addressed.

In a later article (1986), Polyzoi examines the political conditions associated with early Greek immigration from Asia Minor to Toronto, the Canadian government's involvement in the war relief, social adjustments made by early Greek immigrants, and Greek women's participation in the first Greek Ladies Philanthropic Society. Even though her discussion on immigrant Greek women is restricted to the final pages, it highlights how active immigrant Greek women were in promoting and maintaining their Greek heritage in a foreign environment.

In her brief discussion of the Greek school in Toronto she alludes to two important cultural implications embraced by first generation Greek-Canadian children. She states:

> The child who grew up in Toronto did not see the world through the eyes of his Greek-born, Old-World-educated teachers, and, accordingly, questioned the curricular relevance the Greek communal school. ... The Greek after-four school, for all its problems, did help create a degree of Greek self identity in immigrant and Canadian-born children, which in turn shaped their lives (1986, p. 119).

Polyzoi alludes to the formation of cultural values within the context of identity formation. I would have liked to have known how the students resolved the conflicts for themselves. What cultural values did they retain from the 'Old-world', which traditional

cultural values were abandoned, which cultural values from the dominant Canadian society were integrated, and what new cultural values were created as a result? How did these students negotiate and reconcile the differences, and how did this experience shape their identities?

Even though the specifics of lives and experiences are not articulated, this article contributes to our knowledge that immigrant Greek women were active members of their communities. Their efforts were central not only to the creation and maintenance of their communities, but also to the retention and transmission of cultural values. These facts allow us a small glimpse of who these women were and what they considered important in their lives and in the lives of their families. However, these are only small glimpses; we need to uncover additional aspects of these women's identities and experiences. For example, why were these women so active in creating, establishing and maintaining their communities? What exactly was being provided by their communities that was important in the establishment and maintenance of their cultural values?

Thomas (1988) has written an article entitled, "Women in the Greek Community of Nova Scotia." Her study is based upon 300 interviews she conducted among men and women members of the Greek community in Nova Scotia (109 women and 156 men).

Initially upon reading the abstract I was thrilled to have found an article which approached Greek women as individuals and as women. Thomas's abstract states the following:

> A Greek Nova Scotian woman often fills several roles: she is an individual, she has a home and family, she is usually closely connected with the local Greek

> church, and she may work outside the home. ... The Greek Canadian woman is Greek, Canadian, and a woman: her life in Nova Scotia reflects all three (1988, p. 84).

From an initially promising premise Thomas's analysis withered into merely two dimensional generalizations. The creation, maintenance, and retention of an identity and life is multifaceted and is influenced by various factors such as age, gender, political affiliation, economic foundation, and so on, however, Thomas dismisses the importance of situating individuals separate from ourselves within a particular time and place. Every woman has a different biography and history. Thomas unfortunately fails to place these women within their historical, cultural, and social context. By neglecting to provide the reader with information regarding who these women actually are and what has informed their choices she has collapsed their identities and experiences into monolithic categories. As a result, Thomas presents a cardboard and faceless characterization of these women's perceptions and attitudes.

These women have all been painted with the same brush. Thomas makes no mention of these women's ideas, frustrations, fears, loves, disappointments, and the joys they have experienced in their everyday lives. No mention is made regarding the effects of the women's participation in the labor force and/or their involvement in community activities. In one paragraph Thomas states, "Women in their 30's and 40's join in a number of professional and cultural activities beyond the Greek community" (p.88). Having stated this, Thomas does not inform us as to why these women involved themselves in these activities, what type of activities these are, and how these activities might influence the construction and development of their perspectives. In another

paragraph, Thomas states that participating in the Ladies Philoptochos and/or Daughters of Penelope organizations aids in the "develop[ment] of a strong sense of being Greek". Unfortunately, she neglects to elaborate on this statement further. I would have liked to have known how these organizations induced a strong sense of Greekness; were there any non-Greek members within these organizations?; did all Greek women participate in these organizations?; what were the specifics of these women in terms of age, marital status, education, and so on?; or even what 'Greekness' meant to these particular women. Further still, what are the attitudes of first generation Greek-Canadian women towards these organizations?; do they participate in these organizations?; why or why not? How have first generation Greek-Canadian women integrated Canadian and Greek cultural values and how have they reconciled differences? What are their choices regarding their futures?

These women are more than words and sentences scribbled on paper. They are more than mothers, daughters, sisters, aunts, and grandmothers. Their lives are rich in texture, diverse in nature, and multi-vocal in expression. As with all of us, these women are culturally and historically situated within a continuously changing landscape of meanings. However, their stories, voices, and experiences are not reflected in the body of this text.

I know from my mother's stories that her journey to Canada was filled with feelings of anxiety as well as anticipation. Journeys such as hers are saturated in the language of social and psychological adjustment. Lacking the means of communication skills and education, immigrant Greek women faced and overcame environmental and

cultural challenges and created a new place called home for themselves and their children. We need to record more information about immigrant Greek women's experiences within their Greek and Canadian communities. Recording the experiences of immigrant Greek women within these contexts will shed light upon who they are, how they think, feel, act, and see the world around them.

The following excerpt highlights some of the changes my mother faced. My mother's story illustrates that as she moved around within her new environment she was able to negotiate how to resolve these changes.

"Everything Was Different"

When I was leaving [Greece] *I would say* [to herself] *three or four years, more than that I will not stay there. I will leave - **we will leave**. ... 'It's different' – everything was 'different'. The day I arrived your father had put on the table really nice apples and oranges but they didn't have the sweetness – that freshness that they had in Greece. But after I got used to it. It seemed nice.*

*... In the plane they had these nice large steaks. How could I eat them? They seemed '**mavropisa**'* [black and blue]. *How could I eat it? I have thrown away so many meats ... I would buy some 'spareribs' and I would keep the good parts and the rest I would throw away. They seemed black. The chickens were good. To make boiled soup I would buy 'special' chickens to make boiled soup 'avyolemono'* [chicken egg soup].

... It was different from the village. I knew that there was a bigger place and things were different - meats and everything in a row. ... I liked Canada. You can't say I didn't like it. Prince Rupert was a small place and when I came after a little while Katina came. She left Greece the same time I did but she left by boat and I left by plane. She came one month after I did. Maybe I arrived in March and Katina came in April? – somewhere in there. After Katina came we made

Figure 17. When my mother arrived in Prince Rupert in 1962 there were not many Greek women. However, the few that were there quickly became friends. From left to right: Kyria Eleni, Eleni, Yoryia and Katina. From the private collection of Antonio and Eleni Katahan (Photographer A. Katahan, circa 1962-1963).

Figure 18. On sunny afternoons my mother and her friends would go on picnics. My mother remembers these days with great fondness. Photograph from the private collection of Antonio and Eleni Katahan (Photographer A. Katahan, circa 1962-1963).

company. Your father and Jimmie [Katina's husband] *were friends. ... There was Barba Yoryies and his wife Kyria Eleni. Kyria Eleni didn't do anything. When Katina came we would all go and cut 'horta'* [wild greens] (see figures 17 - 18). *She always spoke in Greek. She might have known yes and no but that is about all. When Kyria Eleni would go to the grocery store and buy things, oil and vinegar, those kinds of things. One day she told me she wanted to buy vinegar. So she went to the man and took the lettuce and salads thing* [mother makes a gesture of pouring over the lettuce]. *The man understood she wanted vinegar to buy. She said to him 'yes pethakie mou, yes* [yes my child yes]. *She always spoke in Greek.* ***Because she never went out of the house****. She was older and Barba Yoryies roamed all day. But she stayed in the home. She scrubbed the boards* [floors] *all day – she washed* [laughs] *all day.*

... One day Katina and I were wandering around Woolworth, maybe with someone else – I don't remember. I saw a woman who was sitting there – we were talking in Greek. We left. Another day we went again. She was listening. She came near us. ***It was Stella****, she worked there. She had only Nikos* [her oldest son] *then. We all became friends. ... sometimes we would go for 'volta'* [ride] *to the 'highway'. In the evenings we would go for ice cream. ... An Italian woman looked after him* [the baby Nikos]. *Stella said to me, "I will bring him and you can babysit." I had you and Angie then - the two of you were older. I said, "Well okay bring him." She brought his crib and would bring him in the mornings. After Veronica* [Stella's daughter] *was born they bought a little house, a small house, so they moved there. We would sometimes go visit there. There was lots of snow. George* [Stella's husband] *would make 'snowmen' – he made one that looked like a woman.*

...I didn't have time to make 'kendeemata' [embroideries]. *I would cook in the mornings and at noon I would take lunch to your father. After we would take a 'volta'* [walk] *outside. Kyria Eleni would come sometimes at night to our house and we would sit and talk. Sometimes we would go to a movie. Here, Effy, the*

Figure 19. Getting ready for a Sunday afternoon picnic. Picture was taken in front of our home in Prince Rupert. Photograph from the private collection of Antonio and Eleni Katahan (Photograph Mihali Katahan, circa early 1970's).

people, some worked and some didn't work. After I had Angie I would take the buggy and I would go everyday to the store to your father. Then I had to return home to cook and then I had you. I didn't have time to go for 'volta' [walk] *anymore. If I needed to go shopping your father would come home and look after you so I could go shopping.*

... We moved to the house on eighth avenue before you were born (see figure 19). *I had Angie; she was still a 'new baby.' Maybe it was before September? – October? I think October we moved. We moved next door to Katina. They* [Katina and Jimmie] *had bought their house and Jimmie said to your father, "The house next door is for sale. On that property there is two houses – one upper and one lower. Go and look at them Mihali." Your father went and looked at them. He said, "Well, they are good. We can rent one of them. The other we can live in. They are old but I can fix them." We bought them so we could be two families together. It would have been better if we bought another* [house] *then at another place but 'any ways.'*

.... When we returned from Greece [1972] *you two were older. You were both going to school. What was I to do in the house? I was always 'I don't feel good, I don't feel good.' I didn't know what else to do. Katina worked and she said, "Come Eleni. What else are you going to do here; what else are you going to do alone?" I said, "But I have never worked, I don't know how." She said, "It is nothing." I said I might as well try to get a job at the Prince Rupert Hotel. I went there to the Prince Rupert Hotel and I would help for a few hours doing dishes. I didn't know English then. Katina worked at another hotel. I went and applied there. The lady asked me if I had ever worked before at a hotel. I told her, "No, I only do the work in the house – wash dishes, change the beds, things like that." She said that's what it is! I worked there for maybe six months. They paid us $2.25 an hour. We said, "Other women go to work at the 'herring' at the fishes, let's go and apply." We went to apply; they called us to come. At the hotel only three women remained. We all left – but at the hotel they only gave us $2.25,*

at the fish they gave us $5.00.

*... But what was that '**vroma**'* [stench] *of the herring? The boats would come with crates of herring and those fish had started to 'leosie'* [melt down]. *Only the eggs we would take from the inside - the other parts we left. Where did they go? Somewhere. We worked there all of the 'season.' After we went again to the 'salmon. They would bring nice 'salmon' – this big* [indicating size with hands]. *We would open them and clean them. Then they would go somewhere else again. Others would do this, others would do that* [various tasks]. *After when that was finished Katina said, "Let's go and apply at the Co-op." Co-op had more work and they took us there. I worked how many years there?* [pause] *I worked four years there. ... There was lots of overtime because these fish had to all be cleaned and put into cans. Those Italians* [women] *worked on the other side where they would make the fillets. You could make 'bonuses' there. After we worked at the salmon they put us at the machine. We would put the fish in a row and the machine would cut them. When there was too much in the can you would take some out. When there was not enough you would put more on top. On the other side they would be sealed. This man would put them in iron baskets. I don't remember how long they would sit there with the heat so they could be cooked. When they say that cans have 'chemicals inside;' the cans do not have chemicals inside. Only a fish with a little salt, the water comes from the fish. No 'chemicals' are put inside. Pure fish with a little salt. After when this* [salmon] *was finished the crabs would come. If there were not any crabs they would put us on the other side where they made the fillets. All around these fillets there were barbs* [fish]. *We would clean them and put them on grills. Others would come and take the grills and put them in the refrigerator. ... We made more money there because you started at 8:00 o'clock in the morning and sometimes you worked ten hours – sometimes twelve hours. After eight hours you would get paid 'double time.' ... Teachers would come and work there because they made good money. To go to a store and sell clothes you had to know English good, to write, to read.*

... I learned English from here and from there. Yes, no, where are you going – things like that. Sometimes your father would leave and I would remain at the store. Those things I learned well – the shoe sizes, to ring up the money, to give them change, to keep the 'taxes.' I had a little machine – 'tap, tap.' Those things were nothing for me. ... Most of the women [at the fisheries] *were foreign: Italians, Portuguese, Yugoslavian, Chinese. They were all foreign. Few were Canadian.*

... Well the water would pass and to be wearing the boots, you wore woolen socks. It would be so cold your hands would go numb, Effy, inside the gloves. ... The Italians and Portuguese were talkers. They would sing and laugh and tell jokes. Katina would make these jokes. Some [women] *would understand her and others wouldn't. ... You remember the Chinese woman who lived near the church who had many children? ... The poor thing never wanted to go home. She would stay all night if they told her to stay. I asked her, "Why don't you go home?" She said that her mother-in-law and aunt were staying with her and they didn't do anything. She had to cook for them, clean for them. She did everything. That is why she would rather stay there than go home. ... At noon we would go upstairs and we would eat. There was a table, pots, kettles, stoves, refrigerators. You could bring and make whatever you wanted. We made fresh hot coffee. ... The men would eat in another place. I think it was next door. It wasn't like there was only one or two women. There were lots of women there.*

... I think your father came here [Victoria] *in 1976. After* [pause], *after when the other thing happened to us* [heavy sigh and long pause]. *I didn't want to go again* [to work at the fisheries] *but the 'bosina'* [woman supervisor] *phones and said, "Come, you will lose your seniority." I said, "I don't care." After when I went I would see the other people there; my mind would relax.*

... Now that I am 'retired' I miss my work, I miss my job. 'Yeah' you work and then you get used to it.

"You Can't Say I Didn't Like Canada"

When my mother arrived in Canada in 1962 there were approximately ten Greek families residing in Prince Rupert. She met Yoryia who was unmarried and therefore still concerned a girl. Within the same month of my mother's arrival, Katina arrived. They shared the same cultural background; they spoke the same language, they ate the same foods, and listened to the same music. Together they 'made company'. The presence of these women in my mother's life smoothed the transition from Greece to Canada. Canada did not seem so foreign. She could speak to these women in her own language. These women became substitutes for her female relatives she left in Greece. As a result, she did not feel as alienated in her new cultural landscape.

When my mother left Greece she knew that Canada would be different. Her father had told her stories of his adventures in America and she had witnessed the riches brought back with sojourners. She even says, "I knew that there was a bigger place and things were different – meats and everything in a row." Still, she did have difficulty dealing with meats. She was from a culture which did not have large grocery stores with refrigerating units that kept meats fresh. Her stories of everyday life in Greece indicate that meat was butchered and prepared the very same day. It makes sense that the meats 'seemed black.' They did not seem fresh. Compared to freshly butchered meat that she was accustomed to frozen/refrigerated meat did appear to be rotten. However, in the company of friends and in time she grew accustomed to the colour, odours and way of life in her new environment.

Once my mother became settled in Prince Rupert she no longer had time to

embroider floral pillowcases. She was always in the company of people. If she was not at the store helping my father with various tasks, she was with her friends shopping or going for walks. Upon the arrival of my sister, she had even less time to make 'kendeemata' [embroideries]. She was educated to be a 'nikokyria'. Her time was now spent feeding and bathing an infant, assisting my father in the store, and maintaining her home.

As my sister and I became older my mother ventured out into the work world. She says, "What was I to do in the house? I was always, 'I don't feel good, I don't feel good'. I didn't know what else to do?" She had free time which she no longer knew what to do with. If she had been in Greece she would have been surrounded with her family: aunts, sister, cousins, mother, father, uncles. In Prince Rupert, however, she only had her husband and her few friends. Her friends worked all day and did not have the time to sit and embroider. In fact, they were not as proficient in textile skills as was my mother. Working was an outlet in which her energy was put to use. She was kept busy, she was surrounded with people, and she earned pocket money that she could use as she pleased. In the presence of other women she became aware of other cultural landscapes – other cultural values. She made friends with women with diverse cultural backgrounds. These women shared stories of their lives, families, and homelands. In Greece producing textiles provided women with a social network of other women who shared the same interest in textile production. In Canada my mother's work environment became a substitute for the social network that played a large role in my mother's life. Rather than producing textiles, my mother now actively participated in an arena of activity which

provided her with social as well as economic freedom (to this day the money she earns is hers to do with as she pleased). Eventually, my mother became even more comfortable with her surroundings. She could move about in her Canadian setting without feeling displaced or alienated.

This place has now become my mother's home. Her parents have passed away and her friends from her youth have changed. From the newsletter she receives from Erressos, she knows that the cultural landscape of her youth reflects the influences of technological advancements. Homes are equipped with telephones. Roads are paved and used daily. Women are not as closely watched by the female members of their families. Many move to Athens or travel abroad to other countries in order to pursue career ambitions. She still thinks about returning to Greece but she knows that it will be different; different from her memories and yet again different from what she has become accustomed to in Canada.

I have asked her if she would like to return and live in Greece. She tells me, "What would I do there. My family is here."

"The Years are Different"

I ask my mother, "How come Angie and I didn't make textiles for our dowries?"

"But here the place is big, Effy, and the years are different," my mother responds. She continues, "You don't have the time, firstly. Here the girls go to school. You had ideas from me when you were small because I would show you. Remember when you were knitting. You used to have all sorts of fabrics and you would sew them and make dresses for your dolls."

"But," I pursue, "don't girls need a dowry here. Why don't girls here make textiles for their dowries?"

"Of course they need a dowry," she responds to my query with slight exasperation to her tone. "Each one will have their sheets, bedspreads, pillowcases. Margo [my Canadian friend of Scottish descent], doesn't she have those things? Well, those things are 'prikia' [dowry]," she concludes.

"But what does 'prikia' mean in Greek," I still press on,

"It means the things that you will use in your home," she replies.

Not satisfied with her reply, I question further, "Only those things?"

"Effy, here the children get married. If they have already bought a home, then okay they move inside. But if they don't have they will rent a house or apartment or condominium and live inside. After if their fathers want to give them anything, he will give them something. He might give them a 'condo'. It is a gift. Maybe the parents will help with the purchase of the home. But it is a gift," she tells me.

"But what does it mean to give this thing?" I ask.

"You are helping – of course you are helping," was her simple reply.

There are cultural ideals embedded with the fibres of my mother's dowry textiles. Creating dowry textiles educated her in the skills that would be required in the maintenance of her household and also provided her with status among her community. Attaining the status of 'nikokyria' was her education.

My mother's experiences in Canada have shown her that women are no longer

confined to domestic roles. Women can interact with and establish personal and social relationships with men without the repercussions of being labelled as 'fallen' or not a 'person'. She further recognizes the role technology and education play in the options women have available to them. Women can become doctors, lawyers, nurses, teachers, dentists, and so on. She tells me, "The place is big, Effy, and the years are different." In fact, my mother and father have always stressed the importance of an education. They tell me, "You always have your education. With an education you can do something better for yourself. Education is important."

As a first generation Greek-Canadian woman, do I have a dowry? Initially I believed I did not. However, this thesis has provided me with the realization that I do in fact have a dowry. If my mother's dowry was her education, then I too have a dowry. My actual formal education is my dowry. I have gained the skills to be a researcher. This is my dowry. My education will provide, hopefully, a form of employment which will provide me with economic security through the years. Much like dowry textiles, education serves as a status marker. Status increases with the amount of education attained, which further increases a woman's chances of marrying an 'emperor'.

Through this process I have learned that my dowry is not so different than my mothers. Whereas hers was a visual splash of brightly embroidered flowers, mine is displayed in black and white on the two-dimensional surface of the written page. My mother and I are not that different in that respect. We both consciously pursued our ambitions and attained our goals. Listening to the stories surrounding the circumstances of my mother's dowry textiles, their production and use, has enabled me to cross a

cultural bridge and participate in a cultural landscape that was not so foreign after all. Our differences lie in time and space.

I still feel that the two-dimensionality of the written page can never reflect the three-dimensionality of living life on a daily basis. Our senses are a part of our taken for granted world and as such they do play a role in the way we all negotiate, reconcile and integrate experiences into our repertoire of learning. If I were to do this study again I would incorporate the use of visual and audio senses. Along with the textual component to the thesis, I would have one section which would require the reader to use his/her visual senses. The story would be told only through photographs. In the same vein, another section would consist entirely of audio tapes where the reader would be able to hear the story as it is being told by the research participant.

As well, parallel with my mother's stories I would present stories of my father's and sister's lives. Thereby, demonstrating that there are many overlapping layers of stories in all our lives.

"Finish and Come Home"

My mother phoned me the other day. She phones at least once a week. We make small talk about the weather, our cat Astro, my father and my sister. She asks me how my thesis is coming along. It is almost done I tell her. I have been telling her that since my sister's wedding last summer (see figure 20). I explain I have to finish writing her stories and then I have to give copies to my committee members and then I tell her, "I will take the test." I instantly regret my use of the word test. Unfortunately, I do not have the Greek vocabulary to adequately explain to her the process of defending a thesis.

She quickly responds, "What will happen if you fail." She continues, "You should hurry up and come home. Your father has to go and get his eyes checked. I don't know what we will do if he can't drive anymore. Who will look at the property in Esquimalt. You should hurry up and come home and then we will see what will happen."

My heart sinks. How can I explain to her; how can I make her understand writing a thesis. The distance between us grows greater over the phone. "Yes Mom, I know. But I am only taking one step at a time," I explain. "I can't think that far ahead. I will not be able to do it if I do."

"Okay," she responds. "But you should try and hurry up and come home."

As Visweswaren (1993) aptly recognizes, "Misunderstanding, missed understanding – only because there is a search for understanding" (p. xii).

Figure 20. Family photograph taken at Angela's wedding, August 24, 1996. From left to right: my father, Antonio Katahan; me, Effstratia (Effy) Katahan, my sister, Angela Rocca (Katahan); my brother-in-law, Bruno Rocca; and my mother, Eleni Katahan. Photograph from the private collection of Effy Katahan (Photographer M. Lang, 1996).

APPENDIX A

Questions and Suggestions for Future Research

1. Currently, there is no information on existing textile design and techniques in the village of Erressos. A textile survey needs to be undertaken which documents current, as well as past, textile activities within this village.

- Are differences found in textile design and techniques throughout the island of Lesvos?
- Are there any differences from other islands and mainland Greece?
- Is the practise of creating dowry textiles as prevalent in contemporary Erressos as had been when my mother was a young girl. How has it changed?

2. There is no information available on the role of Western education in the lives of first generation Greek-Canadian children.

- What role does education play in the lives of first generation Greek-Canadian women?
- Is there a difference in education levels between first generation Greek-Canadian women and first generation Greek-Canadian men?
- Are there status markers within education itself? For example, would an engineer or doctor be given more status as compared to an elementary school teacher?

3. Research needs to be conducted on how the children of immigrant parents negotiate and reconcile the cultural differences and to what extent do these differences inform their identities.

- What does it mean to be Greek?
- What does it mean to be Canadian?
- What does it mean to be Greek-Canadian?
- Are there differences between men and women?
- To what extent do Greek events and organizations, such as Greek dances and Greek school in Canada, nurture or inhibit Greek identity in first generation Greek-Canadian children?

4. There is very little information available regarding the daily life of immigrant rural Greek women in Canada as told in their own words. More research needs to be conducted which takes into account their personal histories and experiences.

- What types of employment situations were available to them upon their arrival to Canada?
- How did they learn the language?
- How did they deal with the cultural values that their children were exposed to?
- Why did they discontinue their textile skills? Why did they continue them?
- Why did some immigrant Greek families return to Greece and why did some stay and make Canada their home?
- How do they feel about the career options available to their children?

5. The existing frameworks, honour and shame and public vs. public need to be updated. More research needs to be undertaken which addresses contemporary definitions of honour and shame. The lines between public and private areas of activity are not as rigid as this framework implies. There is little information on the influence of tourism, migration, immigration, mass communication, and feminism on women themselves and how these factors are reconciled and integrated into their everyday lives.

- What implications do these factors hold for the traditional values of women?
- What is created at the juncture of these boundaries?
- What implications does this have for the maintenance of the household?
- What does this mean to the 'chasteness' of women and the virility of men?

6. There is not one way to understand, approach or present reality. As I have maintained throughout this thesis, 'realities' are many things to many people. More research methods need to be developed which take into account the following:

- The positionality of the researcher: how did the researcher arrive at his/her particular interpretations?
- How does a researcher speak for, with and about an individual separate from him/herself?
- How do we encourage critical and respectful dialogue between researcher, research participant and reader?
- How can a researcher present the three-dimensionality of the lived experience within the two-dimensional surface of the written page?

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